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ISSUE 43
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WHITLEY
64
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Joe Pruett / Editor
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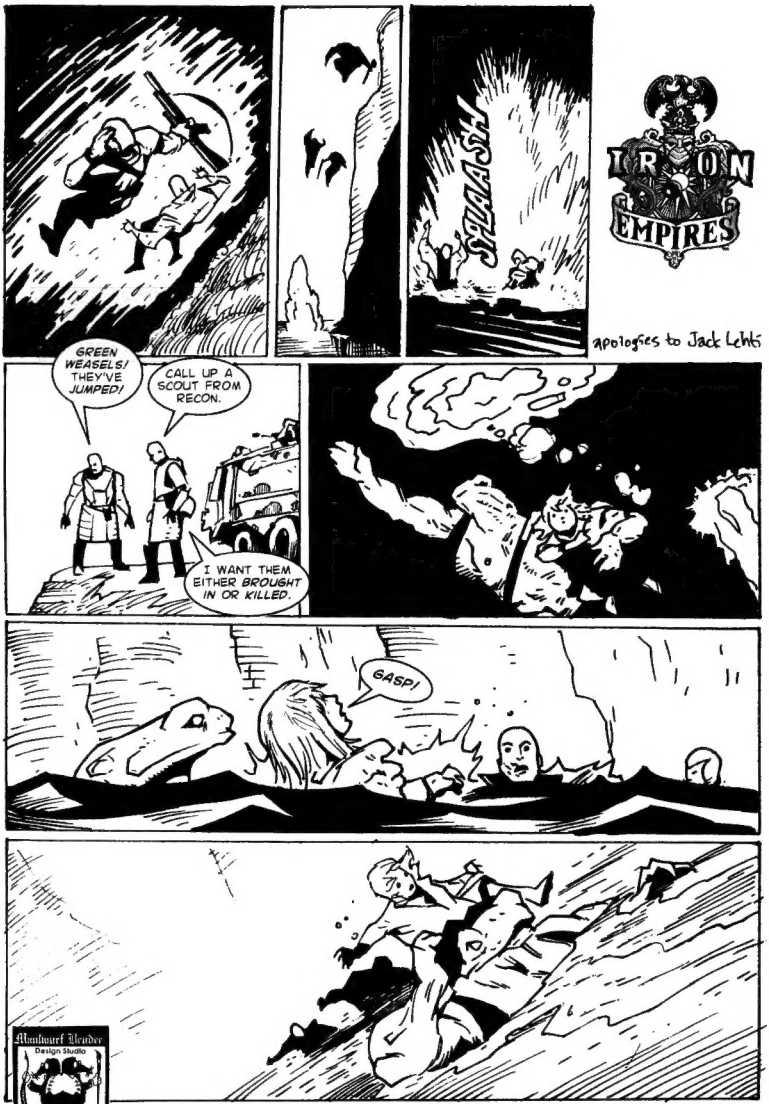

SMASH!
IRON EMPIRES
apologies to Jack Lehti
GREEN WEASELS! THEY'VE JUMPED!
CALL UP A SCOUT FROM RECON.
I WANT THEM EITHER BROUGHT IN OR KILLED.
GASP!
Mantwurf Studio
Design Studio

YOU OK, LIDDLE GIRL?
YES...
GRITZ, WHERE THE HELL ARE WE?
I TINK VEE CLIMB UP INSTEAD, BRUDDA. TO DA CROOKED FINGER.
OH DIS IS GOOT PLACE! OUR PAPA TOLE US ABOUT IT.
BRUDDA, VE GONNA GO IN-TO DA CAVES OF DARKNESS?
OH, LAHK'S SWEET MILK.
HSSSS
HSSSSSSSSSS

HSSSS
SHTAY DOWN! I TAKE CARE OF DIS!
WOOSH
KSSS
TSSH
TSSH
PPPPP
BASE, THIS IS ST-I. I GOT 'EM NAILED DOWN.
I WANT ONE OF THEM ALIVE, ESTEY, DON'T TOAST 'EM ALL.
ROGER THAT. I'LL PLUG THE BIG ONES AND GAS THE REST.
GAAAH!
PFF
PFF

IT'S ALRIGHT, COUNTESS. IT'S ALRIGHT...
KRAK!
YOU BASTARD...
KABP
THE RECON SLED IS A GRAV VEHICLE. IT DOESN'T USE ITS CONTROL SURFACES TO FLY, OR EVEN TO MANEUVER AT LOW SPEED.
WHEN LINEA'S FLECHETTES SHATTER THE SCOUT'S STARBOARD CANARD HOWEVER, IT'S MOVING VERY FAST.
GAHHH!
FAST ENOUGH FOR THE HALF OF THE CANARD WHICH REMAINS TO WRENCH THE SCOUT INTO A TIGHT, CORKSCREW TURN...
WOOM
VIT DA HAWK'S DEATH, COME DA PRETTY FLOWER GROWING...
GROAN!

YOU OK, BRUDDA?
SURE TING! VEE PATCH DIS UP AND I BE EATING BREAD AND VEET-JUICE IN NO TIME!
HA-HA-HA!
IBERUS, WE HAVE TO KEEP GOING. I'M SORRY IF THIS IS FRIGHTENING YOU.
I'M NOT SCARED, UNCLE. I'M NOT.
WE'RE NOT ALONE NOW.
NO, WE AREN'T ALONE ANYMORE, ARE WE? IT SEEMS LIKE I'VE BEEN ALONE FOR SO LONG I'VE GOTTEN USED TO IT.
MY PAPA TOLE US OF A SPECIAL PLACE, DEEP IN THE MOUNTAINS. HE LIFF THERE FOR MANY YEARS. NOBODY GO DERE.
MY PAPA LEAVED IT BE-CAUSE OF DA WAR VIT DA TROLLS. HE ALVAYS VANTED TO GO BACK BUT HE GOT KILT.
HOW FAR IS IT?
MAYBE TREE DAYS. VEE NEVER BEEN DERE, BUT VEE ALVAYS LIKED DA POEM ABOUT IT DAT PAPA TOLE US.
"DA RIVERS BLOOM VIT FRAGRANT FISHES! I LAYED HER IN DA GRASS AND DEN ATE TOMATOES."
DAT REMINDS ME OF PAPA.
DAT'S DA PLACE VE'RE LOOKING FOR.

FOUR DAYS IN.
IF I WERE ALONE, I WOULD *NEVER* SCALE THESE MOUNTAINS.
MASTER TAIRA TAUGHT US NEVER TO *RISK OUR LIVES* OUTSIDE THE *SERVICE*.
"DIE ONLY IN BATTLE" HE WOULD SAY, "ANYTHING LESS IS A DISGRACE."
BETWEEN THESE HEADSTRONG KERRNS AND THIS FEARLESS WOMAN, I'M STARTING TO FEEL LIKE AN OLD MAN.
CLATTER
THANKS. THAT WAS CLOSE.
YOU'RE *WELCOME*. YOU BE MORE *CAREFUL*. YOU'VE GOT PEOPLE *COUNTING* ON YOU NOW.
I HAVE TO KEEP TELLING MYSELF THAT I'M NOT A SOLDIER ANYMORE.

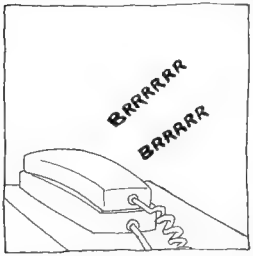
DERE IT IS! DA CROOKED FINGER, JUSS LIKE PAPA SAID!
DIS VAS VERE OUR PAPA LIVED FOR MANY YEARS. DERE USED TO BE MANY KERRNS HERE, BUT DEY ALL GONE NOW.
"DA VALLEY SHPOKE MIT MANY VOICES, BUSHES LAUGHED AND TALKED MIT MOUSES."
DAT'S RIGHT. DERE VAS EVEN KERRN VIMMEN HERE, VIT BIG BOSOMS.
BIG BOSOMS! HOO HOO!

FOUR MONTHS AGO I WAS A WARRIOR. AN ASSASSIN IN IRON, SENT TO KILL A MOTHER AND HER CHILD.
I HAD HONOR, AND GLORY. BUT I HAD NO SOUL.
AND SOMEHOW, THIS CURSED WAR HAS GIVEN ME A FAMILY.
I NEVER THOUGHT THAT WARS COULD END IN ANYTHING BUT BLOOD AND DEATH.
I WON!
NO, I VON!
VAT JOU TINK, GHAZAR? VEE STAY HERE AND WRITE POETRY TOGEDDUH?
I'VE NEVER WRITTEN A POEM. BUT I'D LIKE TO LEARN.
STOP IT UNCLE PEANUT!
HEE HEE HEE
COME HERE JOU, RASCAL!

THE · END · 96

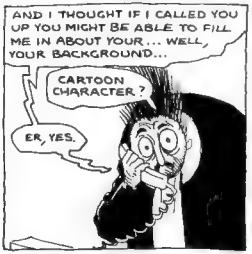
MR. MAMOULIAN
CARTOON CHARACTER

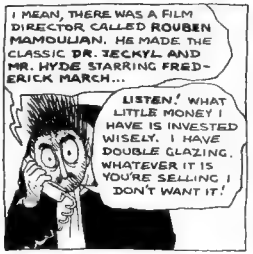
5:1 90 BOLLAND



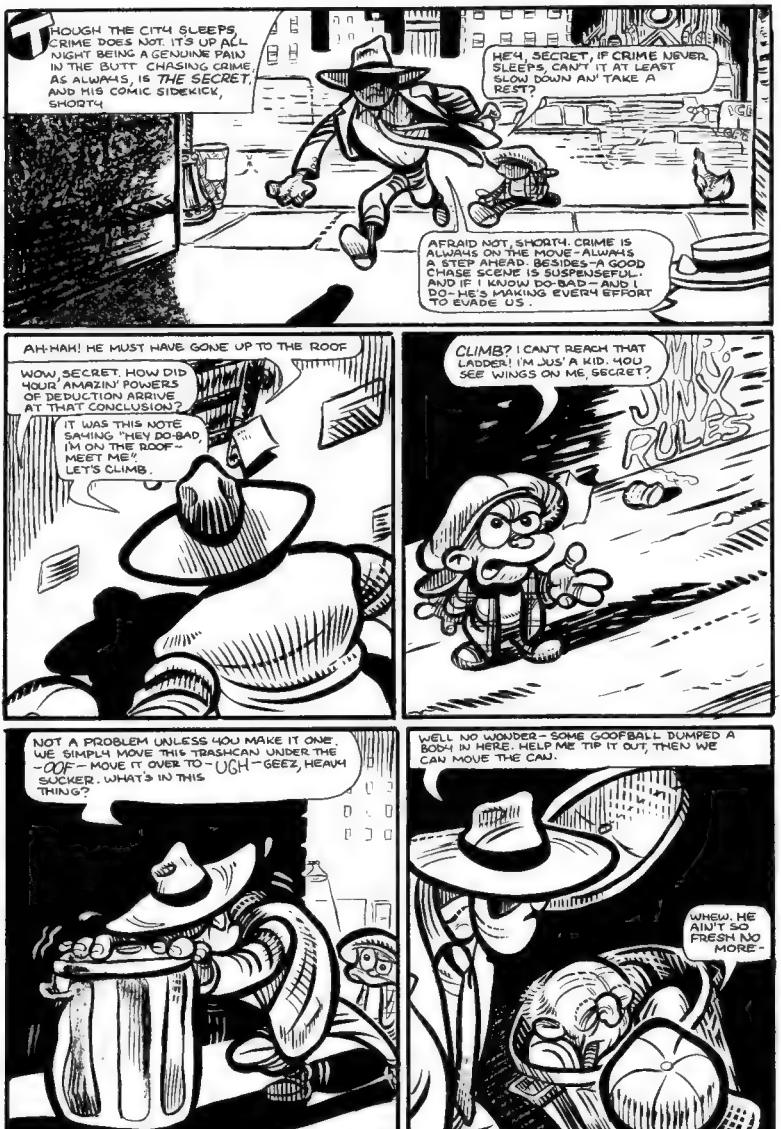
AH!... I HOPE I'M NOT DISTURBING YOU. I'M A SORT OF A CARTOONIST, AND I'VE... WELL, I'VE DEVELOPED – AS WE SAY IN THE CARTOONING TRADE – I'VE **DEVELOPED** THIS CARTOON CHARACTER CALLED **MR. MAMOULIAN.**

ER... YOU SEE HE'S CALLED MR. **MAMOULIAN** AND... WELL... I DON'T HAVE A BACKGROUND OR AN ORIGIN OR ANYTHING WORKED OUT FOR HIM...
HE'S JUST THIS FUNNY LITTLE MAN... NOT UNLIKE MYSELF, REALLY.




I MEAN, THERE WAS A FILM DIRECTOR CALLED **ROUBEN MAMOULIAN.** HE MADE THE CLASSIC **DR. JECKYL AND MR. HYDE** STARRING **FREDERICK MARCH**...
LISTEN! WHAT LITTLE MONEY I HAVE IS INVESTED WISELY. I HAVE DOUBLE GLAZING. WHATEVER IT IS YOU'RE SELLING I DON'T WANT IT!

FROM THE DARKNESS OF NIGHT... FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE SHADOWS... FROM SOME DANK LITTLE ALLEY SOMEWHERE... A SINGLE, SOLITARY FIGURE WALKS THE STREETS... STRIKING FEAR INTO THE HEARTS OF THOSE WHO PREY ON THE GOOD, THE HONEST, THE UNSUSPECTING, THE DOPES WHO DON'T KNOW ENOUGH TO GO TO BED....
WHAT WAS THAT? WAS THAT CRIME?
LOUSY CRIME-
I HATE IT
SOME CALL HIM A VIGILANTE, SOME CALL HIM THE LONE HOPE OF JUSTICE, SOME CALL HIM A NUT WITH A DEATH WISH...
BUT WHEN THEY NEED HIM, THEY CALL HIM...
SCOTT ROBERTS
WOW, MOM! IS HE REALLY THAT BIG?
NO DEAR. THIS IS JUST A SPLASH PAGE
THE SECRET


THOUGH THE CITY SLEEPS, CRIME DOES NOT. IT'S UP ALL NIGHT BEING A GENUINE PAIN IN THE BUTT. CHASING CRIME, AS ALWAYS, IS THE SECRET, AND HIS COMIC SIDEKICK, SHORTY.
HEY, SECRET, IF CRIME NEVER SLEEPS, CAN'T IT AT LEAST SLOW DOWN AN' TAKE A REST?
AFRAID NOT, SHORTY. CRIME IS ALWAYS ON THE MOVE - ALWAYS A STEP AHEAD. BESIDES - A GOOD CHASE SCENE IS SUSPENSEFUL. AND IF I KNOW DO-BAD - AND I DO - HE'S MAKING EVERY EFFORT TO EVADE US.
AH-HAH! HE MUST HAVE GONE UP TO THE ROOF.
WOW, SECRET. HOW DID YOUR AMAZIN' POWERS OF DEDUCTION ARRIVE AT THAT CONCLUSION?
IT WAS THIS NOTE SAYING "HEY DO-BAD, I'M ON THE ROOF - MEET ME". LET'S CLIMB.
CLIMB? I CAN'T REACH THAT LADDER! I'M JUS' A KID. YOU SEE WINGS ON ME, SECRET?
MR. JINX RULES
NOT A PROBLEM UNLESS YOU MAKE IT ONE. WE SIMPLY MOVE THIS TRASHCAN UNDER THE -OOF- MOVE IT OVER TO -UGH- GEEZ, HEAVY SUCKER. WHAT'S IN THIS THING?
WELL NO WONDER - SOME GOOFBALL DUMPED A BODY IN HERE. HELP ME TIP IT OUT, THEN WE CAN MOVE THE CAN.
WHEW. HE AIN'T SO FRESH NO MORE -

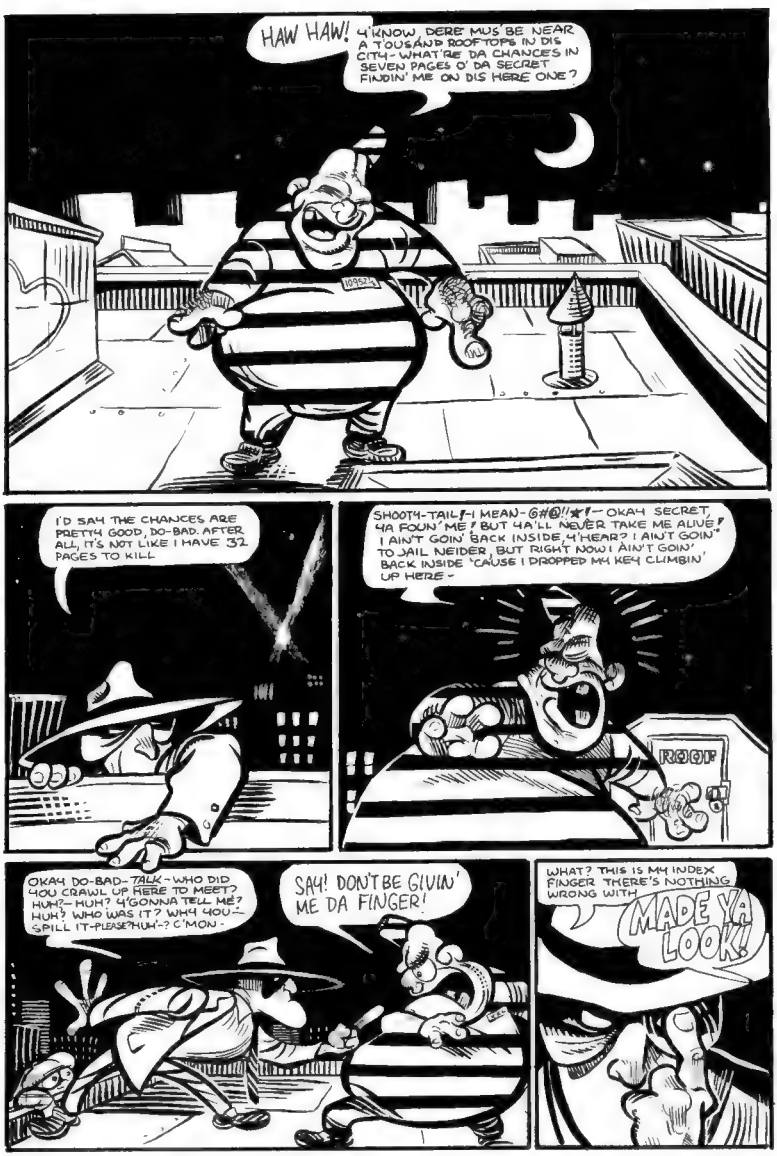
UPS-A-DAISY
SAVE YOUR UPS-A-DAISIES, SECRET. I GOT IT NOW -

THERE, SEE? NO SWEAT! I'M ON TH' LADDER O' SUCCESS!

WHOA - IT JUS' 'CURRED TO ME, SECRET. S'POSE SOMEBODY UP THERE STARTS IN TO SHOOTIN' US, ME BEIN' A KID AN' ALL, SHOULDN'T YOU BE GOIN AHEAD TO SHIELD MY TENDER YOUNG SELF?

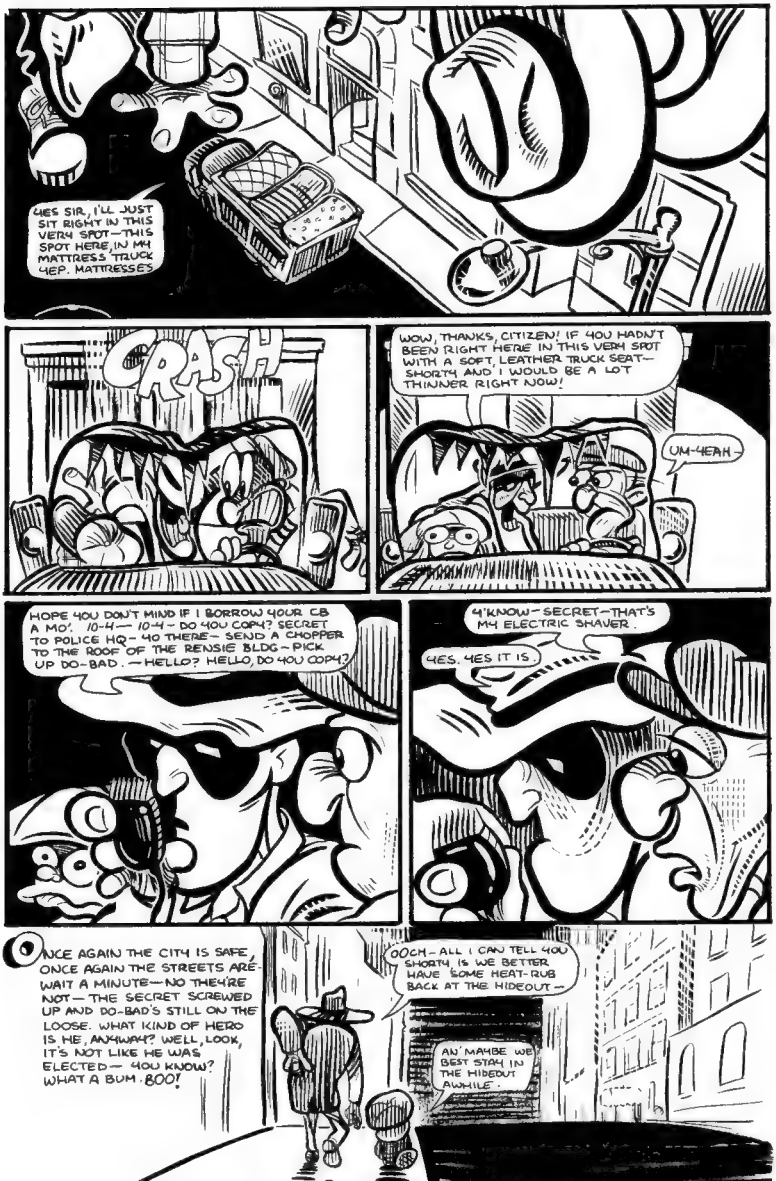
YOU'RE RIGHT, SHORTY. HOLD STILL WHILE I GET PAST YOU -
HEY!
WATCH IT WHEN YOU'RE CLIMBIN' ON MY HEAD!

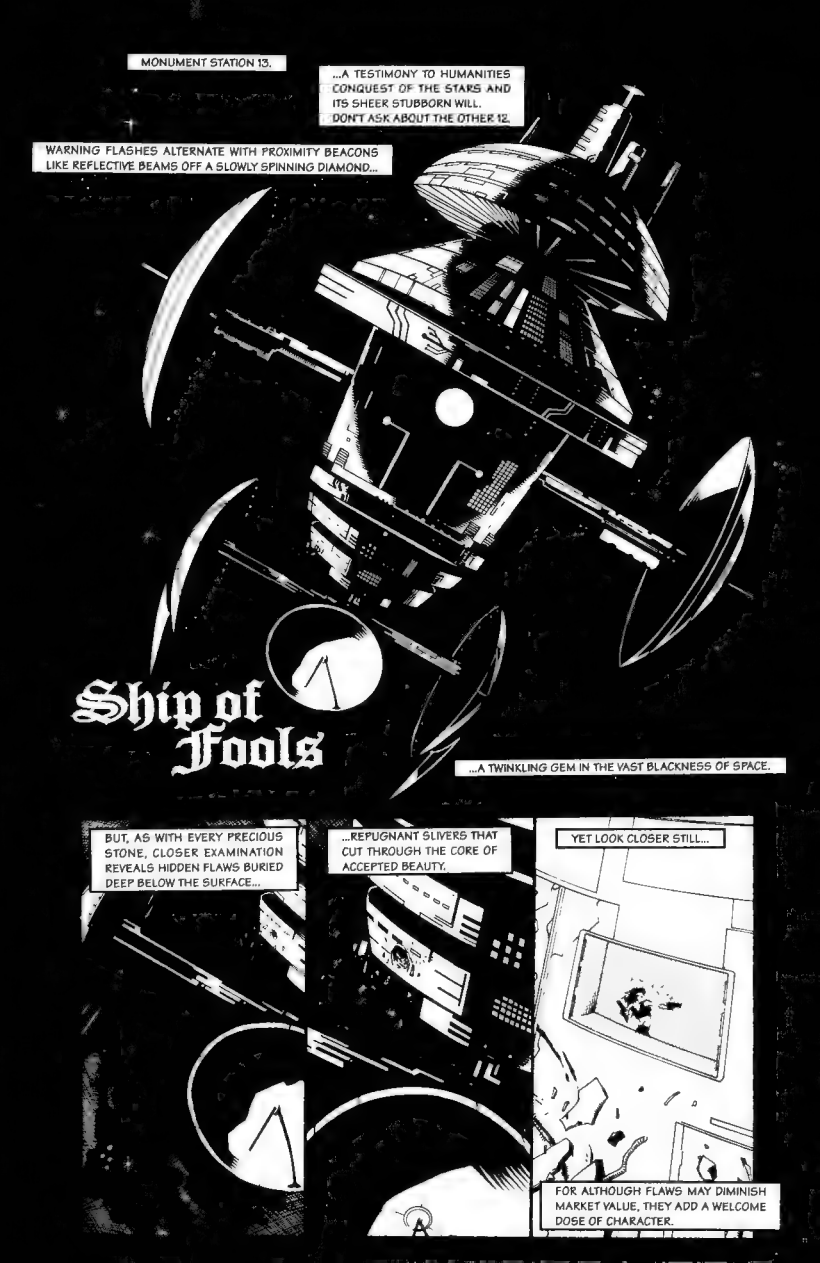
OKAY, SHORTY - LET'S CLIMB TO THE CRIME HEY, I MADE A RHYME - CAN YOU THINK OF ONE, SHORTY?
DON'T BE GETTIN' ALL CORNBALL ON ME, SECRET -


HAW HAW! 4'KNOW, DERE MUS' BE NEAR A TOUSAND ROOFTOPS IN DIS CITY- WHAT'RE DA CHANCES IN SEVEN PAGES O' DA SECRET FINDIN' ME ON DIS HERE ONE?
I'D SAY THE CHANCES ARE PRETTY4 GOOD, DO-BAD. AFTER ALL, IT'S NOT LIKE I HAVE 32 PAGES TO KILL
SHOOT4-TAIL-I MEAN-G#@!!*!- OKAY SECRET, 4A FOUN' ME! BUT 4A'LL NEVER TAKE ME ALIVE! I AIN'T GOIN' BACK INSIDE, 4'HEAR? I AIN'T GOIN' TO JAIL NEIDER, BUT RIGHT NOW I AIN'T GOIN' BACK INSIDE 'CAUSE I DROPPED MY KEY CLIMBIN' UP HERE-
ROOF
OKAY DO-BAD-TALK- WHO DID YOU CRAWL UP HERE TO MEET? HUH?- HUH? 4'GONNA TELL ME? HUH? WHO WAS IT? WHY YOU- SPILL IT-PLEASE?HUH-? C'MON-
SAY! DON'T BE GIVIN' ME DA FINGER!
WHAT? THIS IS MY INDEX FINGER THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH
MADE YA LOOK!!

ZANG
BOY-O-BOY, READERS CAN'T HOUSE BELIEVE IT WAS DAT EASY!
HEH HEH
SMASH
YOU OUGHT TO KNOW BETTER THAN TO LOOK AWAY, DO-BAD.
OW! MY POOR WISDOM TOOT! IF I HADN'TA HAD IT PULLED, IT'D REALLY HOIT!
AND NOW, MY OBESE ADVERSARY - WE ENTER ENDGAME!

OOPS - WE SURE DO!
HAW! KEEPAWAY! YA MISSED ME!
I STINK - I'M DA WOIST
WELL - THIS IS JUST GREAT WE'RE NOT ONLY PLUNGING RAPIDLY TO OUR GRISLY DEATHS - BUT NOW WE'LL NEVER KNOW WHO DO-BAD WENT UP THERE TO MEET NERTZ.
ALL THAT AIN'T TRUE, SECRET - ACTUALLY WE DO KNOW -
WELL I HAVE TO ADMIT I AM SURPRISED. BUT IF YOU DON'T MIND SOME CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM - AND I DON'T MEAN TO NITPICK - NEXT TIME, COULD YOU CHOOSE A TRAP CLOSER TO THE GROUND - YOU KNOW - CUT DOWN ON HAZARDS LIKE FALLING -
G'SEE - IT WAS ME THAT LEFT THAT NOTE, IN ORDER TO LURE DO-BAD TO THE ROOF AN' TRAP HIM. SEEIN' AS I AIMS TO BE A EXPERT CRIMINOLOGIST LIKE YOURSELF, I FIGURED I'D SET IT UP ON MY OWN, AN' SURPRISE YOU WITH IT - TA DA!
SECRET, IF THERE WAS GONNA BE A NEXT TIME, I'D BEAR THAT IN MIND.
THIS LOOKS LIKE AS GOOD A SPOT AS ANY TO PARK MY TRUCK FULL OF SOFT, CUSHY MATTRESSES. HEH, I SAID MATTRESSES.


YES SIR, I'LL JUST SIT RIGHT IN THIS VERY SPOT—THIS SPOT HERE, IN MY MATTRESS TRUCK YEP. MATTRESSES
CRASH
WOW, THANKS, CITIZEN! IF YOU HADN'T BEEN RIGHT HERE IN THIS VERY SPOT WITH A SOFT, LEATHER TRUCK SEAT— SHORTY AND I WOULD BE A LOT THINNER RIGHT NOW!
UM-YEAH
HOPE YOU DON'T MIND IF I BORROW YOUR CB A MO'. 10-4— 10-4 - DO YOU COPY? SECRET TO POLICE HQ- 10 THERE- SEND A CHOPPER TO THE ROOF OF THE RENSIE BLDG - PICK UP DO-BAD. — HELLO? HELLO, DO YOU COPY?
I'KNOW- SECRET—THAT'S MY ELECTRIC SHAVER.
YES, YES IT IS.
ONCE AGAIN THE CITY IS SAFE, ONCE AGAIN THE STREETS ARE- WAIT A MINUTE— NO THEY'RE NOT— THE SECRET SCREWED UP AND DO-BAD'S STILL ON THE LOOSE. WHAT KIND OF HERO IS HE, ANYWAY? WELL, LOOK, IT'S NOT LIKE HE WAS ELECTED— YOU KNOW? WHAT A BUM. BOO!
OOOH- ALL I CAN TELL YOU SHORTY, IS WE BETTER HAVE SOME HEAT-RUB BACK AT THE HIDEOUT—
AW MAYBE WE BEST STAY IN THE HIDEOUT AWHILE.


MONUMENT STATION 13.
...A TESTIMONY TO HUMANITIES CONQUEST OF THE STARS AND ITS SHEER STUBBORN WILL. DON'T ASK ABOUT THE OTHER 12.
WARNING FLASHES ALTERNATE WITH PROXIMITY BEACONS LIKE REFLECTIVE BEAMS OFF A SLOWLY SPINNING DIAMOND...
Ship of Fools
...A TWINKLING GEM IN THE VAST BLACKNESS OF SPACE.
BUT, AS WITH EVERY PRECIOUS STONE, CLOSER EXAMINATION REVEALS HIDDEN FLAWS BURIED DEEP BELOW THE SURFACE...
...REPUGNANT SLIVERS THAT CUT THROUGH THE CORE OF ACCEPTED BEAUTY.
YET LOOK CLOSER STILL...
FOR ALTHOUGH FLAWS MAY DIMINISH MARKET VALUE, THEY ADD A WELCOME DOSE OF CHARACTER.

IMPROVISE...
...OR DIE!
THEY SEIZE THE MOMENT WITH RECKLESS ABANDON AND CONFORM REALITY TO THEIR OWN PERCEPTION.
BOUNDRIES GROW HAZY...
...GOOD & BAD, RIGHT & WRONG...
...GENIUS AND THE DAMNED.
GOOD WORK, AMIGO!
DREAM TEAM WINS AGAIN.
WHO'S THAT, MAYA?
NOBODY, SHIRO.
YOU HOLD THE FORT. I'LL GO CHECK ON THE OTHERS...

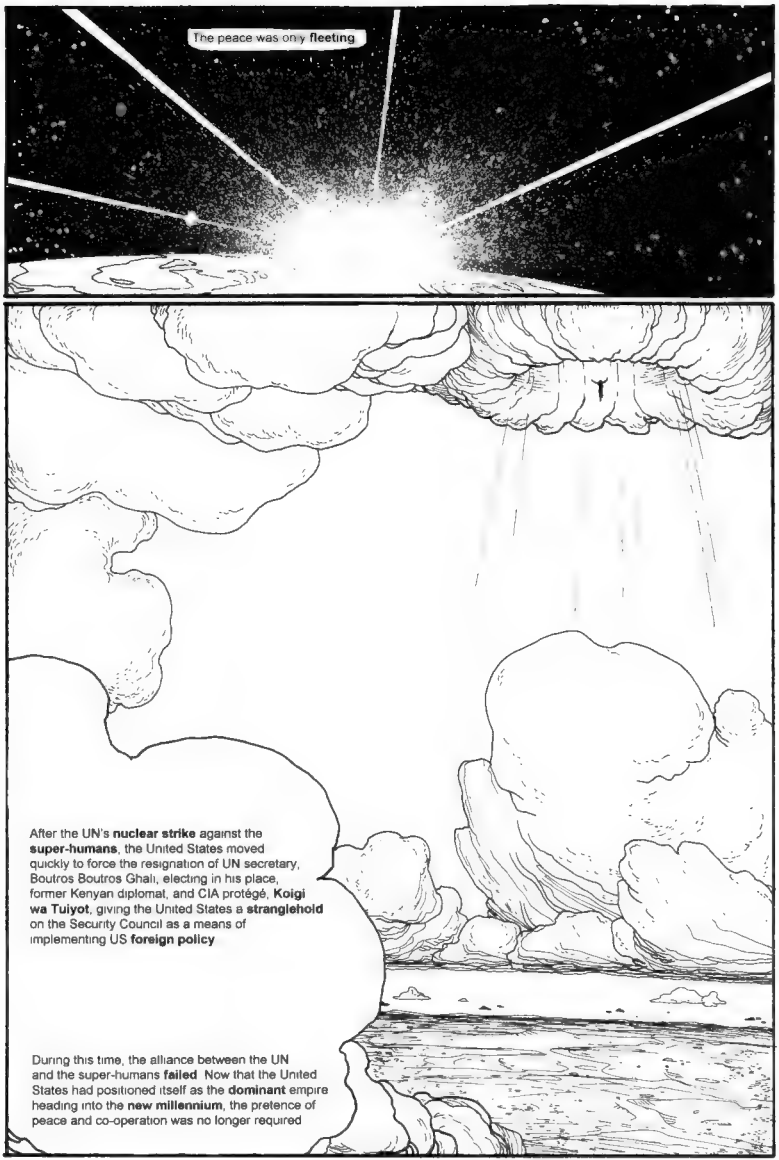
FOR EXAMPLE...
UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES, THEY'RE A PLEASANT BUNCH.
REALITY BYTES
QUICK WITH A JOKE, EAGER TO LAUGH... MAYA WOULD PASS THE SALT IF YOU ASKED.
DIE!
YOU PENDEJO ASSHOLES!
SHIRO GIVES HIS SEAT TO THE ELDERLY ON THE TRANSTAR LINES.
GET READY!
BOTH EXCUSE THEMSELVES TO BREAK WIND
ORDINARY FOLKS...
BUT LIKE MOST OF US, THEY DON'T HANDLE PRESSURE VERY WELL.
I'M SETTIN' A DISTRACTION!
SOMETHING SNAPS, PUSHING THE WHITE GAUGE INTO RED...
...SPARKING THE CREATIVE IMPULSE.

...MAKE SURE FEARLESS LEADER DOESN'T MAKE THINGS ANY MORE COMPLICATED FOR US.
QUANTUM SHIELDING DOWN... NEGATING AUTO-GRAV... BEAUTIFUL.
ARE WE FINISHED?
I'M MAKING SURE YOU DON'T DRAG YOUR ASS ON THIS.
IS THAT THE REALITY BYTE?
FELCH YOU, DARIUS. SHIRO'S GOT US COVERED.
I ASSUME YOU'RE HERE BECAUSE YOU NEEDLESSLY ALLOWED OUR DEFENSES TO BE OVERRUN?
NO...IT'S A GEM.
A WHAT?
A CRYSTALLIZED, CARBON STONE CONSIDERED QUITE VALUABLE IN SOME SECTORS.
WHAT ABOUT THE REALITY BYTE?
THAT'S SOMEPLACE WITH MUCH TIGHTER SECURITY.
A JEWEL HEIST?
DAMN YOU, DARIUS!
WAS THAT NECESSARY?

MARICÓN!
ARE WE ALL SO EXPENDABLE?
DO YOU SNUFF ME WITHOUT A THOUGHT AND BLUNDER THROUGH THE CONSEQUENCES LATER...
CURSING MY NAME FOR DYING WITHOUT A FIGHT?
"VERDAD", DARIUS. YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS?
"TRUTH", MAYA. A PAINFUL PILL IN ANY LANGUAGE...HARD TO SWALLOW.
SO YOU TELL LIES AND PLAY US ALL LIKE PUPPETS.
OURS IS A MUTUAL SYMBIOSIS...
EITHER DIES AND WE DAMN THE OTHER.
YOU HAD NO RIGHT RISKING OUR LIVES FOR MONEY AND NOT HAVING A PLAN FOR GETTING OUT!
BUT I DO...
ATLANTA WILL CLEAR THE WAY TO THE LANDING BAY WHERE LLOYD WAITS WITH THE SHIP.
ATLANTA? SHE'S BEEN A ZOMBIE FOR 2 DAYS!
NO...
I'VE HAD HER INTERNALIZING.
LLOYD...
DANGER...
THE SHIP.
THE SHIP...
DANGER...
LLOYD!

AS I UNSEAL THE SECURITY BAY, I KNOW I UNLEASH A BEAST.
THE BEAST INSIDE HER MIND... SPEAKING MY WORDS IN A VOICE TOO FAMILIAR.
DAMNED LLOYD-BITCHIN' BASTARDS!!!
MY OWN BEAST...
...GIVEN OUTLET THROUGH HER.
IT TELLS HER WHAT TO DO...
HOW TO MOVE...
WHERE TO STRIKE...
...AND SHE LISTENS SO WELL.
ATLANTA CLEARS OUR WAY TO FREEDOM, LEAVING BEHIND THE VOICES ONLY I CAN HEAR.
MURDERER.
CHILD KILLER.
HELL BOUND
IF ONLY ESCAPING MY OWN MIND WAS AS SIMPLE.

LLOYD!
I DREAMED YOUR SMILE FOREVER TORN...ETERNITY'S ORPHAN.
I HAVE NO SMILE.
I HAVE NO FACE.
I HAVE NOTHING TO HIDE.
DARIUS!
YOU RISKED MAYA'S LIFE FOR THIS BAUBLE?!
BAUBLE.
WE SELL THE GEM, JUST LIKE THE GREAT BRAIN PLANNED...
EXCEPT WE KILL HIM FIRST!
MOST UNWISE...
TELL THEM LLOYD.
I'VE PREPARED A LIGHT SNACK...
...OVER WHICH WE CAN RATIONALLY DISCUSS DARIUS' TAMPERING OF THE ENGINES.
UNLESS I ENTER SPECIFIC CODES HOURLY, THE SHIP WILL EXPLODE.
YOU DON'T TRUST US?
NOW THAT A SMALL MEASURE OF SANITY PREVAILS...
WE SELL THE "HEART STONE", ACQUIRE SOME REAL WEAPONRY, STEAL THE "REALITY BYTE"...
...AND SAVE THE UNIVERSE.
YOU'RE CRAZY, DARIUS.
YES, MY DEAR.
AREN'T WE ALL.
...END.


The peace was only **fleeting**
After the UN's **nuclear strike** against the **super-humans**, the United States moved quickly to force the resignation of UN secretary, Boutros Boutros Ghali, electing in his place, former Kenyan diplomat, and CIA protégé, **Koigi wa Tuiyot**, giving the United States a **stranglehold** on the Security Council as a means of implementing US **foreign policy**
During this time, the alliance between the UN and the super-humans **failed**. Now that the United States had positioned itself as the **dominant** empire heading into the **new millennium**, the pretence of peace and co-operation was no longer required

As for the **Hero** he had withdrawn from the public eye a **second** time
Hibakusha
©RobWalton 1996
None had seen him since
WHY HAVE YOU COME, GODDESS?
WHAT MORE IS THERE TO SEE OR SAY?
HIBAKUSHA A BOMB WITNESS/SURVIVOR

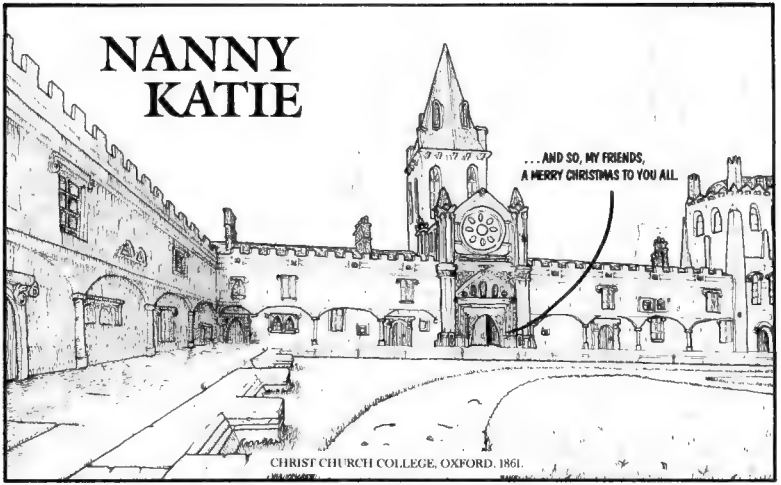
THERE'S STILL TIME TO CHANGE THE WAY THINGS ARE.
HEH, HEH, HEH.
CHANGE THINGS?
THE ONLY THING I WOULD CHANGE WOULD BE MY DECISION NOT TO KILL THEM ALL WHEN I HAD THE CHANCE.
I SHOULD'VE BROUGHT DOWN THE CEILING ON THEIR HEADS LIKE SAMSON IN THE TEMPLE.
THE GLASSES YOU GAVE ME ARE ON THE TABLE. I DON'T NEED THEM ANYMORE.
LIKE SAMSON, THEY'VE TAKEN MY EYES AS WELL.
THOSE NOBLE EYES THAT SAW SO MUCH POTENTIAL FOR PEACE.
PEACE? IT WAS MY VISION FOR PEACE THAT MADE ME A LIABILITY.
THAT'S WHAT THE BOMB WAS ABOUT, GODDESS.
YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THEIR FEAR.
THEIR "FEAR?"

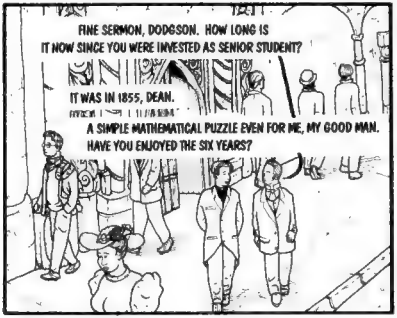
LOOK AT ME, GODDESS!
NOW YOU TELL ME WHAT THERE IS TO UNDERSTAND!
THEY NEVER WANTED PEACE.
THEY TOLERATED ME SO LONG AS I DEFENDED AMERICA FROM SUPER-VILLAINS, AND EVIL GENIUSES.
THE MOMENT I TURNED MY ATTENTION TO INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, TO A PEACE THAT TRANSCENDED POLITICS, RACE, AND RELIGION...
THE MOMENT I DREAMED OF MOVING THE HUMAN SPECIES TO A NEW LEVEL OF SOCIAL EVOLUTION...
THEY DID THIS TO ME!
TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND THE AMERICAN WAY.
YOU'RE LOOKING AT IT, GODDESS.
THIS BODY WITH ITS BURNS, TUMOURS, AND WEEPING SORES, RIDDLED WITH CANCER...
THIS IS THE SYMBOL OF AMERICA.
THE SYMBOL THAT THE ESTABLISHED ORDER WILL NOT BE MOVED, CHANGED, OR CHALLENGED.
NOT BY WAR.
AND CERTAINLY NOT BY PEACE.
YOU CAN BE A NEW SYMBOL. SHOW YOURSELF. SHOW THE WORLD WHAT THEY DID TO YOU!

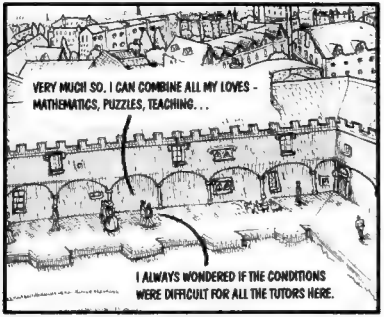
A SYMBOL?
IF IT'S A SYMBOL YOU WANT...
TAKE THIS.
THERE'S A JAPANESE FOLK TALE THAT SAYS IF YOU FOLD ONE THOUSAND PAPER CRANES, YOU WILL LIVE A LONG LIFE.
HERE'S THE FIRST.
I WILL NOT LIVE TO SEE THE SECOND.
TAKE IT BACK TO THE WORLD, LET THEM FINISH WHAT I'VE BEGUN.
LET THEM REALISE THE PEACE I ONLY GLIMPSED AT THE END OF MY LIFE.
I DON'T WANT TO BE REMEMBERED FOR THE DEFORMITIES I SUFFERED— AN OBJECT OF PITY— BUT FOR THIS PAPER CRANE.
IT IS MIGHTIER THAN I EVER WAS.
NO, MY FRIEND. YOU MUST DELIVER IT YOURSELF.
ONLY ONE WHO HAS WALKED OUT OF HELL KNOWS THERE HAS BEEN ENOUGH SUFFERING.
ARTEMIS.

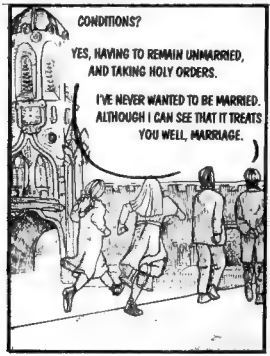
I CAN'T FLY.
NO. BUT YOU HAVE WINGS.
COME.

NANNY KATIE

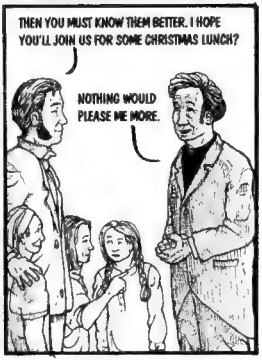

. . . AND SO, MY FRIENDS, A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL.
CHRIST CHURCH COLLEGE, OXFORD. 1861.


FINE SERMON, DODGSON. HOW LONG IS IT NOW SINCE YOU WERE INVESTED AS SENIOR STUDENT?
IT WAS IN 1855, DEAN.
A SIMPLE MATHEMATICAL PUZZLE EVEN FOR ME, MY GOOD MAN. HAVE YOU ENJOYED THE SIX YEARS?

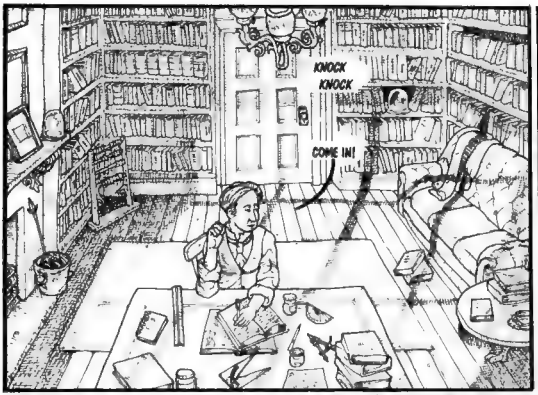

VERY MUCH SO. I CAN COMBINE ALL MY LOVES - MATHEMATICS, PUZZLES, TEACHING. . .
I ALWAYS WONDERED IF THE CONDITIONS WERE DIFFICULT FOR ALL THE TUTORS HERE.


CONDITIONS?
YES, HAVING TO REMAIN UNMARRIED, AND TAKING HOLY ORDERS.
I'VE NEVER WANTED TO BE MARRIED. ALTHOUGH I CAN SEE THAT IT TREATS YOU WELL, MARRIAGE.

I CAN'T COMPLAIN - - OOOF! ALICE MY GIRL!
DO YOU KNOW MY DAUGHTERS, DODGSON?
ONLY BY SIGHT, I AM SAD TO RELATE.


THEN YOU MUST KNOW THEM BETTER. I HOPE YOU'LL JOIN US FOR SOME CHRISTMAS LUNCH?
NOTHING WOULD PLEASE ME MORE.

DID YOU EVER?
. . . WHITE CHRISTMAS. . .
TAG, YOU'RE IT!
WOOOPS!
GIRLS, GIRLS! THIS IS REVEREND DODGSON.
YES, WE KNOW. YOU WERE TALKING TO HIM AFTER CHAPEL
HE TEACHES ARITHMETIC, DOESN'T HE, DADDY?
NUMBERS!
THAT'S QUITE RIGHT GIRLS.
AHEM.
AND THIS IS THEIR GOVERNESS, MISS PRICKETT.
PLEASED TO MEET YOU, MA'AM.
NOW RUN ALONG, GIRLS.
BUT WE WANT TO TALK TO THE REV. DODGSON - -
HMPH! THERE WILL BE PLENTY OF TIME LATER. NOW REV. DODGSON, TELL ME ABOUT THIS POEM, "SOLITUDE" - -
I BELIEVE THAT IT WAS WRITTEN BY A CERTAIN MR. CARROLL . . . .
COME, NOW, REVEREND. THERE ARE A FEW THINGS I KNOW. ONE OF THEM IS THAT YOUR NOM-DE-PLUME IS INDEED LEWIS CARROLL - - -
HOW - - -
AND THE SECOND IS THAT YOU HAVE A VIVID IMAGINATION AND A GREAT LOVE OF STORYTELLING.
SOMETHING I THINK THE GIRLS WILL FIND OUT.

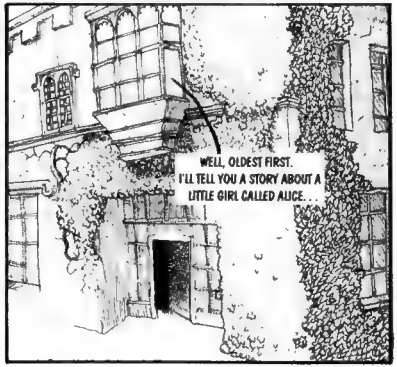

KNOCK
KNOCK
COME IN!

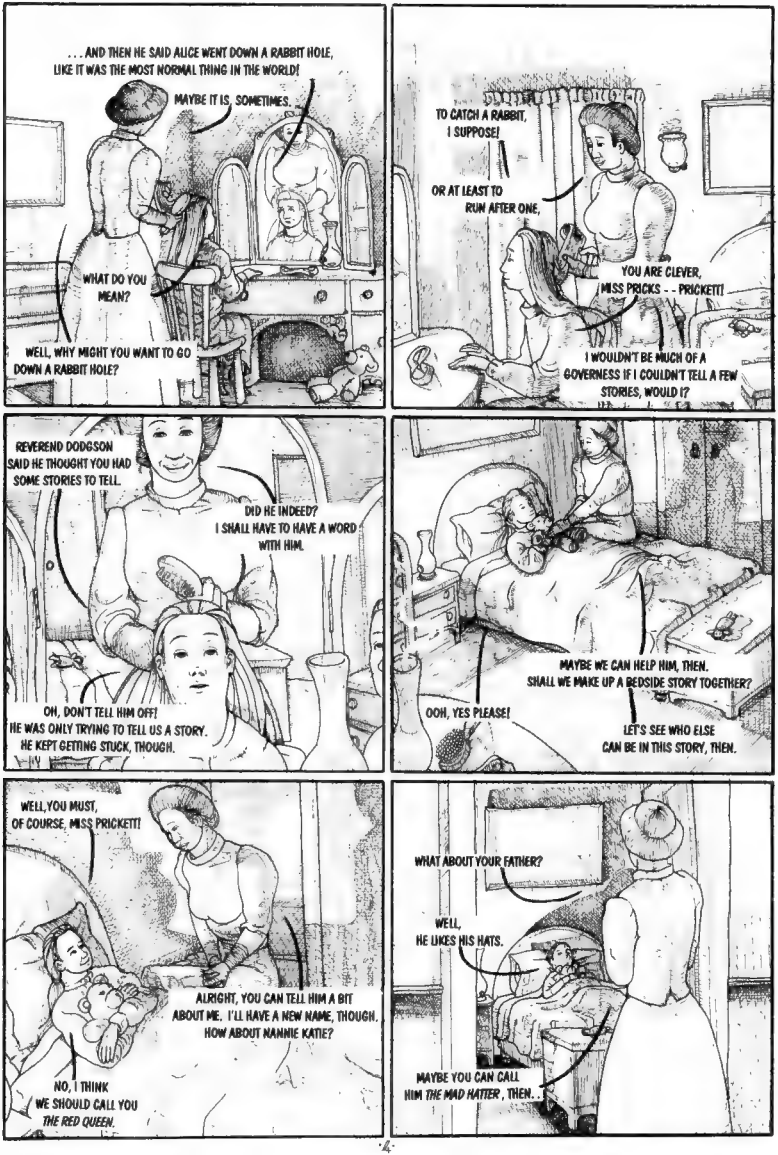
FATHER SAID WE COULD COME UP, IF YOU PLEASE, REVEREND.
OF COURSE IT PLEASES ME...
ALICE!
AND LORINA AND EDITH, TOO!

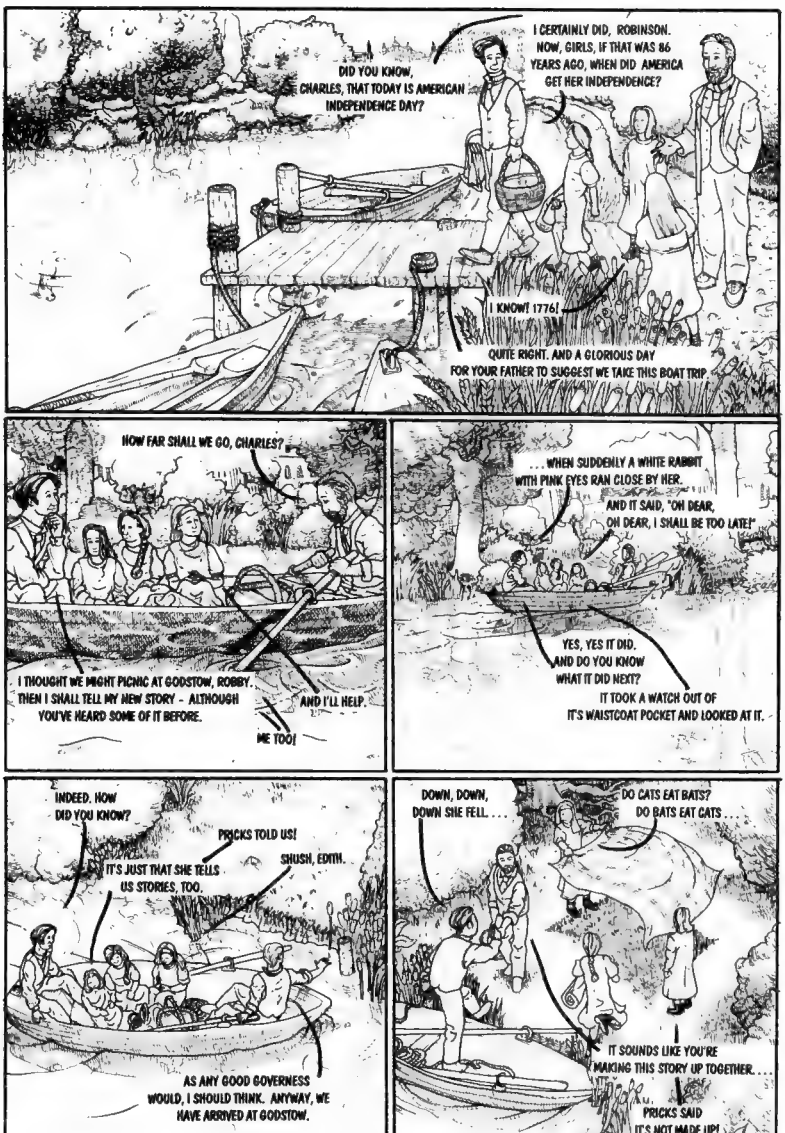
NOW, LET ME SEE. HOW ABOUT SOME GAMES WITH NUMBERS? DO YOU KNOW "FIZZ BUZZ"?
WE DO, REVEREND BUT WE'D LIKE YOU TO TELL US A STORY.

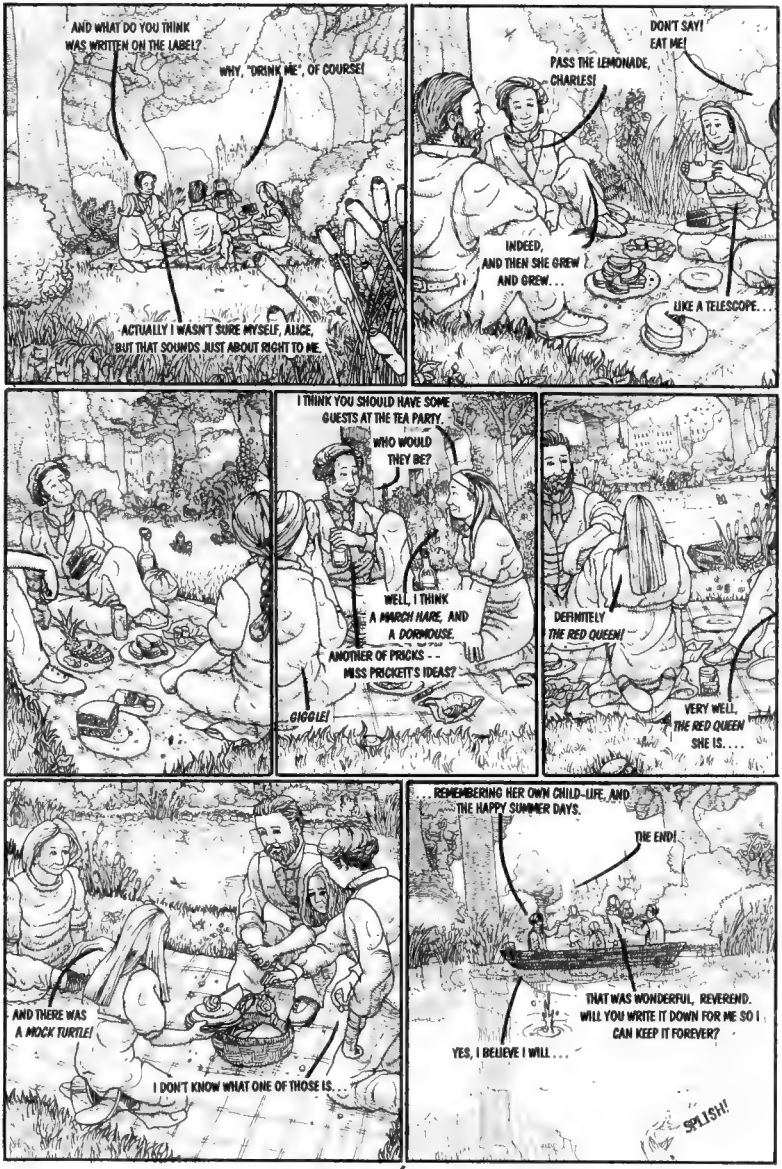
A STORY? WELL I'LL TRY. I DON'T KNOW IF I'M VERY GOOD AT STORIES.
YES, TRY!
A FAIRY STORY! PRICKS SAID - - -
SHUSH, EDITH

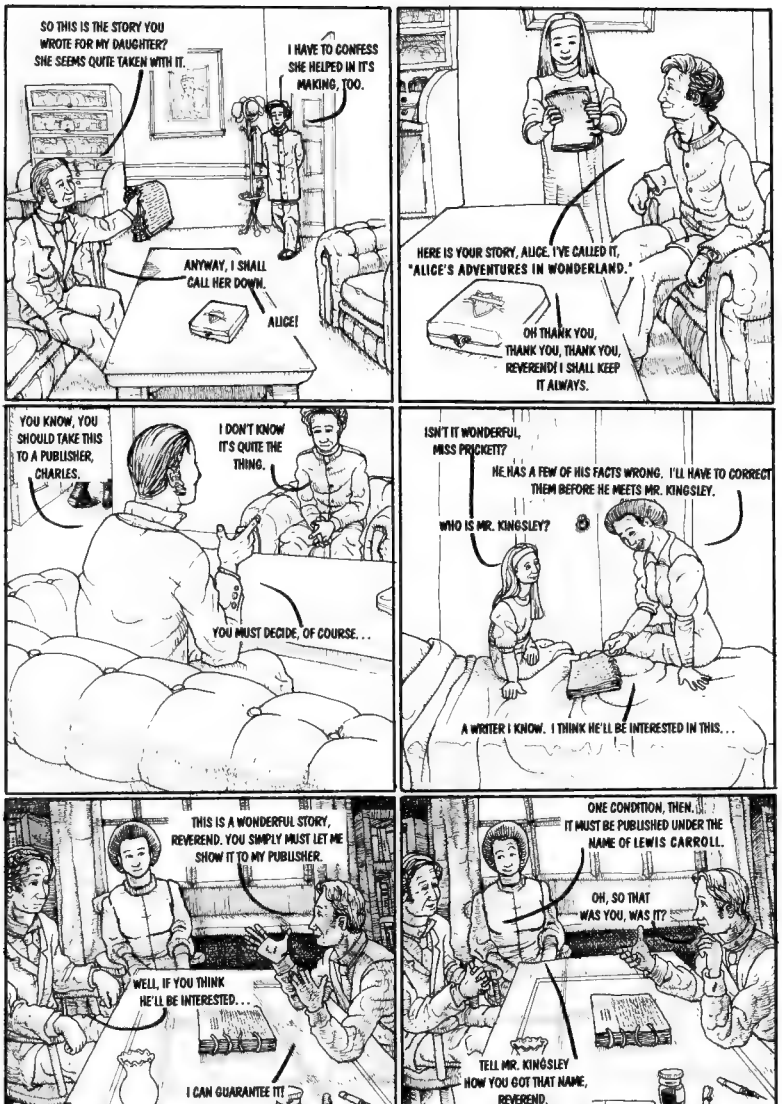
'PRICKS', IS IT? IS THAT WHAT YOU CALL MISS PRICKET!?
WELL, ONLY SOMETIMES.
MY LIPS ARE SEALED. NOW, WHO WANTS TO BE IN THIS STORY?
ME, ME, ME!


WELL, OLDEST FIRST. I'LL TELL YOU A STORY ABOUT A LITTLE GIRL CALLED ALICE...


. . . AND THEN HE SAID ALICE WENT DOWN A RABBIT HOLE, LIKE IT WAS THE MOST NORMAL THING IN THE WORLD!
MAYBE IT IS, SOMETIMES.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
WELL, WHY MIGHT YOU WANT TO GO DOWN A RABBIT HOLE?
TO CATCH A RABBIT, I SUPPOSE!
OR AT LEAST TO RUN AFTER ONE,
YOU ARE CLEVER, MISS PRICKS - - PRICKETT!
I WOULDN'T BE MUCH OF A GOVERNESS IF I COULDN'T TELL A FEW STORIES, WOULD I?
REVEREND DODGSON SAID HE THOUGHT YOU HAD SOME STORIES TO TELL.
DID HE INDEED? I SHALL HAVE TO HAVE A WORD WITH HIM.
OH, DON'T TELL HIM OFF! HE WAS ONLY TRYING TO TELL US A STORY. HE KEPT GETTING STUCK, THOUGH.
MAYBE WE CAN HELP HIM, THEN. SHALL WE MAKE UP A BEDSIDE STORY TOGETHER?
OOH, YES PLEASE!
LET'S SEE WHO ELSE CAN BE IN THIS STORY, THEN.
WELL, YOU MUST, OF COURSE, MISS PRICKETT!
ALRIGHT, YOU CAN TELL HIM A BIT ABOUT ME. I'LL HAVE A NEW NAME, THOUGH. HOW ABOUT NANNIE KATIE?
NO, I THINK WE SHOULD CALL YOU THE RED QUEEN.
WHAT ABOUT YOUR FATHER?
WELL, HE LIKES HIS HATS.
MAYBE YOU CAN CALL HIM THE MAD HATTER, THEN.


DID YOU KNOW, CHARLES, THAT TODAY IS AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE DAY?
I CERTAINLY DID, ROBINSON. NOW, GIRLS, IF THAT WAS 86 YEARS AGO, WHEN DID AMERICA GET HER INDEPENDENCE?
I KNOW! 1776!
QUITE RIGHT. AND A GLORIOUS DAY FOR YOUR FATHER TO SUGGEST WE TAKE THIS BOAT TRIP.
HOW FAR SHALL WE GO, CHARLES?
I THOUGHT WE MIGHT PICNIC AT GODSTOW, ROBBY. THEN I SHALL TELL MY NEW STORY - ALTHOUGH YOU'VE HEARD SOME OF IT BEFORE.
AND I'LL HELP.
ME TOO!
. . . WHEN SUDDENLY A WHITE RABBIT WITH PINK EYES RAN CLOSE BY HER.
AND IT SAID, "OH DEAR, OH DEAR, I SHALL BE TOO LATE!"
YES, YES IT DID. AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT DID NEXT?
IT TOOK A WATCH OUT OF IT'S WAISTCOAT POCKET AND LOOKED AT IT.
INDEED. HOW DID YOU KNOW?
PRICKS TOLD US!
IT'S JUST THAT SHE TELLS US STORIES, TOO.
SHUSH, EDITH.
AS ANY GOOD GOVERNESS WOULD, I SHOULD THINK. ANYWAY, WE HAVE ARRIVED AT GODSTOW.
DOWN, DOWN, DOWN SHE FELL. . . .
DO CATS EAT BATS? DO BATS EAT CATS . . .
IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE MAKING THIS STORY UP TOGETHER. . . .
PRICKS SAID IT'S NOT MADE UP!


AND WHAT DO YOU THINK WAS WRITTEN ON THE LABEL?
WHY, "DRINK ME", OF COURSE!
ACTUALLY I WASN'T SURE MYSELF, ALICE, BUT THAT SOUNDS JUST ABOUT RIGHT TO ME.
DON'T SAY! EAT ME!
PASS THE LEMONADE, CHARLES!
INDEED, AND THEN SHE GREW AND GREW...
LIKE A TELESCOPE...
I THINK YOU SHOULD HAVE SOME GUESTS AT THE TEA PARTY.
WHO WOULD THEY BE?
WELL, I THINK A MARCH HARE, AND A DORMOUSE.
ANOTHER OF PRICKS -- MISS PRICKETT'S IDEAS?
GIGGLE!
DEFINITELY THE RED QUEEN!
VERY WELL. THE RED QUEEN SHE IS....
AND THERE WAS A MOCK TURTLE!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT ONE OF THOSE IS...
REMEMBERING HER OWN CHILD-LIFE, AND THE HAPPY SUMMER DAYS.
THE END!
THAT WAS WONDERFUL, REVEREND. WILL YOU WRITE IT DOWN FOR ME SO I CAN KEEP IT FOREVER?
YES, I BELIEVE I WILL...
SPLISH!


SO THIS IS THE STORY YOU WROTE FOR MY DAUGHTER? SHE SEEMS QUITE TAKEN WITH IT.
I HAVE TO CONFESS SHE HELPED IN IT'S MAKING, TOO.
ANYWAY, I SHALL CALL HER DOWN.
ALICE!
HERE IS YOUR STORY, ALICE. I'VE CALLED IT, "ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND."
OH THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU, REVEREND! I SHALL KEEP IT ALWAYS.
YOU KNOW, YOU SHOULD TAKE THIS TO A PUBLISHER, CHARLES.
I DON'T KNOW IT'S QUITE THE THING.
YOU MUST DECIDE, OF COURSE...
ISN'T IT WONDERFUL, MISS PRICKETT?
HE HAS A FEW OF HIS FACTS WRONG. I'LL HAVE TO CORRECT THEM BEFORE HE MEETS MR. KINGSLEY.
WHO IS MR. KINGSLEY?
A WRITER I KNOW. I THINK HE'LL BE INTERESTED IN THIS...
THIS IS A WONDERFUL STORY, REVEREND. YOU SIMPLY MUST LET ME SHOW IT TO MY PUBLISHER.
WELL, IF YOU THINK HE'LL BE INTERESTED...
I CAN GUARANTEE IT!
ONE CONDITION, THEN. IT MUST BE PUBLISHED UNDER THE NAME OF LEWIS CARROLL.
OH, SO THAT WAS YOU, WAS IT?
TELL MR. KINGSLEY HOW YOU GOT THAT NAME, REVEREND.

IT WAS A SIMPLE TRICK, I ASSURE YOU. MY NAME, CHARLES LUTWIDGE, IS CAROLUS LUDOVICUS IN LATIN. I SEE, YOU SIMPLY REVERSED THE NAMES...
AND CHANGED THEM BACK INTO ENGLISH. YES.
ANOTHER MATHEMATICAL GAME FOR YOU, REVEREND.
NOW HENRY, WE MUST INTRODUCE HIM TO THAT ARTIST YOU KNOW, JOHN TENNIEL...
...AND I MUST SPEAK TO MATTHEW ARNOLD ABOUT HIS POEM, THYRSIS. I THINK HE WANTS TO CALL OXFORD THE "CITY WITH HER DREAMING SPIRES", OR SOME SUCH.
AND THAT'S HOW IT ALL STARTED. OF COURSE, DODGSON HAD ALREADY PUBLISHED SOME POEMS, AND THEN HE WROTE THE SECOND STORY OF ALICE...
THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS YOU MEAN?
THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS, AND WHAT ALICE FOUND THERE, IT WAS CALLED. AND THEN THERE WAS SYLVIE AND BRUNO, AND THE HUNTING OF THE SNARK, PHANTASMAGORIA, ALL HIS MATHEMATICS BOOKS ...
OF COURSE, ALICE'S ADVENTURES WERE ALWAYS MY FAVOURITE. IT WAS FUNNY HOW PRICKS SEEMED TO KNOW THE STORIES TOO. SOMETIMES I THINK I SEE HER AROUND OXFORD, BUT OF COURSE, SHE MUST BE DEAD NOW...
SHE ONCE TOLD ME TO CALL HER NANNIE KATIE, THOUGH. I NEVER UNDERSTOOD THAT....
FIN

SNOWCONE
Story by
Aldyth Beltane
Art by
Jon Macy
SNOWCONE
I GOT YOUR LITTLE PACKAGE TODAY. THANK YOU
HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT I SENT YOU ANYTHING?

YOU'RE THE ONLY WOMAN I KNOW WHO WEARS PALE LIPSTICK.
I DON'T USE IT UP AS FAST SINCE WE STOPPED SEEING EACH OTHER.
I APPRECIATE YOU SENDING IT TO ME. THAT WAS A SWEET GESTURE.
IT WASN'T A "SWEET" GESTURE! IT WAS A PLAYFUL GESTURE!
AND DO YOU WANT TO COME OVER AND..
...PLAY?
WELL, I DON'T KNOW. DO YOU NEED PERMISSION TO HAVE GIRLS AT YOUR HOUSE?

I DON'T HAVE TO ASK PERMISSION FOR ANYTHING!
YOU MEAN, IT WON'T MAKE YOUR "MOMMY" MAD, IF I COME OVER AND SEE YOU?
OH, HER. I DON'T SEE HER ANYMORE.
THEN I'D LOVE TO COME OVER AND PLAY WITH YOU. SHOULD I BRING MY TOYS?
NO. ALL YOU NEED TO BRING IS YOURSELF.
THE END

CHK
GOOD EVENING. I'M FENWICK.
MY PARTNER, MAW, AND I WILL NOW BORE YOU IN A DARKENED CLOSET!
-YAWN-
OH!
COMICS TO BORE & CONFUSE YOU
CHK
GOOD EVENING. I'M FENWICK.
MY PARTNER, MAW, AND I WILL NOW BORE YOU IN A DARKENED CLOSET!
-YAWN-
OH!
CHK
GOOD EVENING. I'M FENWICK.
MY PARTNER, MAW, AND I WILL NOW BORE YOU IN A DARKENED CLOSET!
-YAWN-
OH!

CHK
GOOD EVENING. I'M FENWICK.
STILL HERE, EH?
MY! YOU MUST BE REALLY BOREDOM DEFIC-IENT!
-YAWN-
NO WORRY. WE'LL FIX THAT SOON ENOUGH, RIGHT MAW?
RIGHT!
FSP
OW!
WATCH NOW AS WE DISGUISE OURSELVES AS BUTLERS IN THE DARK!
OH BOY!
OOF!
UF!
BUMP
OW!
BAM
THUMP
BUMP
KRNK
CREEEEEE
UH-OH!

HMHM HMHM HMMM!
MAW, DID YOU HEAR SOMETHING?
HOW COULD I? IT'S TOO DARK IN HERE!
OH, PENELOPE, PENELOPE! IF ONLY YOUR FATHER, THE MAYOR, KNEW YOUR WORTH!
BUT SOON, HE WILL SELL YOU TO ME-- YOU AND HE ALIKE...
AND THEN--
IT WILL BE I WHO RULES THIS GRAND CITY OF OURS!!
FROM THERE, ALL THAT REMAINS IS TO LEARN HOW TO STEER IT!
HMMM...
RRRR--
CURSES!

STILL, IT ELUDES ME... A MEANS OF GUIDING THIS WRETCHED SHIP I COVET!
HOW MIGHT I INFLUENCE HUNDREDS, THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE? IMPART A MESSAGE THEY'LL LAP UP LIKE THE DOGS THAT THEY ARE?
WHY NOT USE COMICS?
MAW!
GAA--!
WHO ARE YOU?!
WE'RE FENWICK AND MAW...
COMIC BOOK MAKERS!
COMIC BOOK MAKERS, HM?
WELL, COMIC BOOK MAKERS, I AM DARGWIN...
AND IF YOUR COMIC BOOKS ARE TRULY WHAT I NEED TO INFLUENCE THE MASSES...
THEN YOU AND I ARE ABOUT TO BECOME VERY RICH!
SO LET US RETIRE NOW TO MY OFFICE, COMIC BOOK MAKERS...
AND WE SHALL DISCUSS DEEP, SECRET THINGS, AND PLOT THE PLANS OF GENIUS!

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND, CLAY PETER?
PLANS & GENIUS
by
OHHH... STUFF.
NAMELY, HOW GLORIOUS IT WILL BE WHEN WE TAKE THIS CITY BY STORM!
"STUFF." LIKE--?
UM...
UH... LET'S SEE...
..STUFF LIKE, FOR INSTANCE, ALL OF THE RIGHTEOUS THINGS WE'LL BE ABLE TO DO TOGETHER!
I MEAN, WITH YOUR INFINITE POWER, AND ME AS YOUR MOUTHPIECE, JUST IMAGINE THE *CRIMES* WE COULD UNCOVER!
IN FACT--HEY, I KNOW! I'LL GO TO THE LIBRARY-- THE *POLICE STATION* EVEN-- AND DO SOME RESEARCH ON MAJOR CRIME RINGS IN THE AREA!
THEN YOU AND I COULD GO OUT AND **BUST SOME HEADS!!**
CLAY PETER.
NO SINNER WILL GO UNPUNISHED!
--NO CRIME LEFT UN-DISCLOSED.
CLAY PETER.
WE COULD CALL OURSELVES "THE MINISTRY OF CONVICTION"!
CLAY PETER!!
WE
Yeah?

BY WHAT AUTHORITY DO YOU PLAN TO DO THESE THINGS?
CERTAINLY NOT BY MINE!
OR DO YOU NOT KNOW WHAT SPIRIT YOU ARE OF?
I CAME TO SAVE, CLAY PETER, NOT TO DESTROY.
...
I'M SORRY.
I'LL DO WHATEVER YOU WANT ME TO DO.
ARE WE STILL FRIENDS?
WE'RE STILL MORE THAN FRIENDS AND INDEED, I HAVE FORGIVEN YOU.
SO ALWAYS REMEMBER CLAY PETER...
TRUE LOVE ALWAYS FORGIVES.
SO WHAT'RE WE GONNA DO NOW?
MARVELOUS THINGS, CLAY PETER!
NOW, TO THE TRAIN STATION!
THE TRAIN STATION!?
WHATEVER YOU SAY!
JUST WAIT AND SEE!!

STANBOSTA ION
WELL, HERE WE ARE.
WHAT NEXT?
toot-toot
-CHEA-CHEA
DO YOU SEE THAT WOMAN OVER THERE?
THE ONE WITH THE BOOK?
YES. APPROACH HER. MAKE CONVERSATION.
....!

PARDON ME-- IS THIS SEAT TAKEN?
OH!
OH...
--I'M SORRY! I THOUGHT FOR A MOMENT THAT YOU WERE MY FIANCÉE!
HEH... NOT ME! I'M CLAY PETER!
I'M ELLEN.
--HERE, HAVE A SEAT.
IT'S NOT TAKEN.
YOU SURE?
OH, OF COURSE.
I'M TRAVELLING ALONE.
--WHICH MUST BE WHY YOU WERE STARTLED WHEN YOU THOUGHT I WAS YOUR FIANCÉE!
YES.
ACTUALLY, I'M ON MY WAY TO THE TOWN OF KENDALL TO BE A SCHOOL TEACHER.
REALLY?
YES! IT'S A POSITION I'VE ALWAYS WANTED...
TEACHING SCHOOL CHILDREN AND ALL THAT...
AND WHEN I ANSWERED AN ADVERTISEMENT IN THE PAPER...
...I WAS ACCEPTED IMMEDIATELY!
HM!
ANYWAY, I DON'T KNOW WHY I'M TELLING YOU ALL THIS, BUT IT'S ALL JUST SO EXCITING!
INDEED!
YOUR FIANCÉE MUST BE VERY PROUD!
HE-- HE DOESN'T KNOW I'M GOING.
HE DOESN'T?

WHY NOT?
BECAUSE...
--I DID SOMETHING HORRIBLE!
SOMETHING I WOULD NEVER CONFESS...
SOMETHING HE WOULD NEVER FORGIVE!
THAT'S WHY I'M HERE, CLAY PETER...WHY I'M GOING AWAY TO TEACH...
I'M RUNNING AWAY!
I HAVE TO.
I DON'T THINK I CAN HANDLE THIS!
SO GLAD YOU ADMITTED IT, CLAY PETER! NOW RELAX, AND I'LL GIVE YOU WHAT TO SAY.
..BUT NO MATTER.
I'VE GOT A BRIGHT NEW FUTURE AHEAD AND--
--AND AFTER ALL, I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO TEACH...
BUT ELLEN...
IS THAT REALLY YOUR HEART'S DESIRE?
MY HEARTS DESIRE?
WELL...
YES...YES, IT'S--

NO!
NO IT'S NOT!
I WANT HIM.
I WANT HIM, CLAY PEIER.
BUT HOW COULD HE EVER TAKE ME BACK?!
TRUE LOVE FORGIVES, ELLEN.
....
TRUE LOVE FORSIVES.
SORRY, DOVE...
BUT IF YOU ARE A SIGN FROM THE SUPREME BEING...
I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO EMBRACE YOU!
BUT...
ISN'T THE PURSUIT OF YOUR HEART'S DESIRE WORTH THAT RISK?
BUT WHAT IF YOU'RE WRONG, CLAY?
THEN WHAT?
THEN I'M WRONG.

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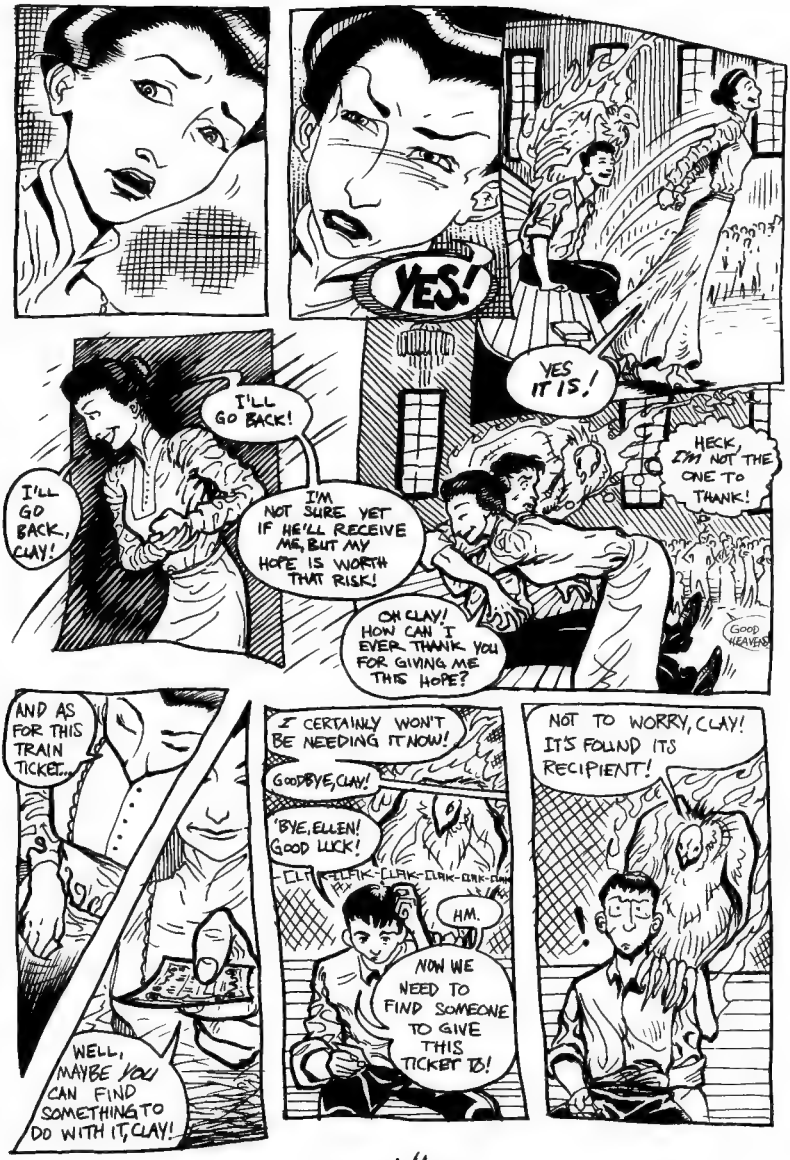
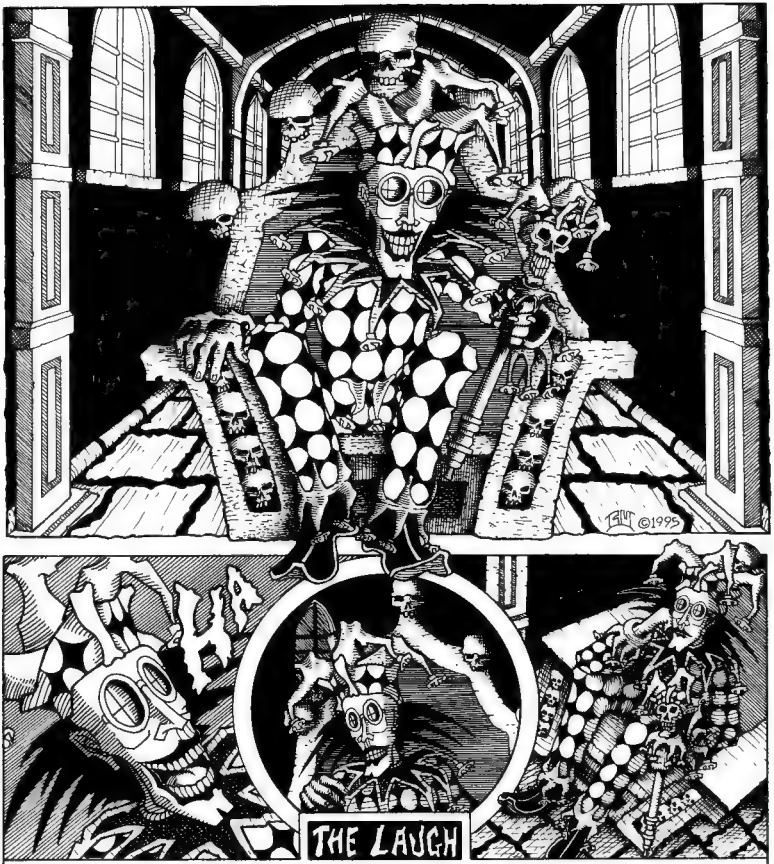

YES!
YES IT IS!
HECK, I'M NOT THE ONE TO THANK!
GOOD HEAVENS
I'LL GO BACK!
I'LL GO BACK, CLAY!
I'M NOT SURE YET IF HE'LL RECEIVE ME, BUT MY HOPE IS WORTH THAT RISK!
OH CLAY! HOW CAN I EVER THANK YOU FOR GIVING ME THIS HOPE?
AND AS FOR THIS TRAIN TICKET...
WELL, MAYBE YOU CAN FIND SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT, CLAY!
I CERTAINLY WON'T BE NEEDING IT NOW!
GOODBYE, CLAY!
'BYE, ELLEN! GOOD LUCK!
CLI-KILFIK-CLAK-CLAK-CAK-CLAK
HM.
NOW WE NEED TO FIND SOMEONE TO GIVE THIS TICKET TO!
NOT TO WORRY, CLAY! IT'S FOUND ITS RECIPIENT!

NECKBEARD-AWAY
ELLIOT WRITES
JASON DRAWS
HEY, BOB, WHAT'S WRONG?
SUSIE BROKE UP WITH ME, ROY!
WHAT!? WHY'D SHE DUMP ON YOU?
LET ME PULL DOWN MY TURTLE-NECK AND SHOW YOU.
GASP! NECKBEARD!
DO YOU SUFFER FROM THE RAVAGES OF NECKBEARD?

ARE YOU FORCED TO WEAR TURTLENECKS YEAR ROUND TO COVER UP YOUR EMBARASSING AFFLICTION?
MARCH 9
MARCH 8
MARCH 7
MARCH 6
MARCH 1
MARCH 2
MARCH 3
MARCH 4
GUYS! WAIT!
SNOB!
DO YOUR FRIENDS THINK YOU'VE BECOME A RICH SNOB BECAUSE YOU'VE TAKEN TO WEARING AN ASCOT AND SMOKING JACKET TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM THE HAIRY GROWTH SPROUTING FROM YOUR NECK?
NECKBEARD, A CONDITION WHICH FINDS THE BEARD GROWING ON THE NECK WITH TWICE THE THICKNESS OF FACIAL HAIR, IS EASILY REMEDIED WITH NECKBEARD-AWAY DEPILATORY WONDER-CREAM!
SQUAWK APPLE
NECKBEARD-AWAY CONTAINS A SPECIAL SOLUTION THAT DISSOLVES THOSE FRUSTRATING FOLLICLES RIGHT OUT AT THE ROOTS, PREVENTING THEIR EMBARASSING RETURN FOR UP TO A WEEK PER USE! SO GET OUT OF THAT TURTLENECK AND GET INTO NECKBEARD-AWAY!
POP!
SAY, BOB! YOU'RE LOOKING CHIPPER! AND YOU'RE NOT WEARING THAT GOOFY ASCOT AND SMOKING JACKET ENSEMBLE! WHAT'S THE OCCASION?
SO LIFE CAN BEGIN AGAIN...
I'VE GOT SUSIE BACK... AND NOW I CAN WEAR ALL MY FAVORITE V-NECK AND OPEN-COLLAR SHIRTS!
LOOKS LIKE YOU GOT SMART... AND GOT NECKBEARD-AWAY! HA HA HA!
HA HA HA!
THE END!
TDD



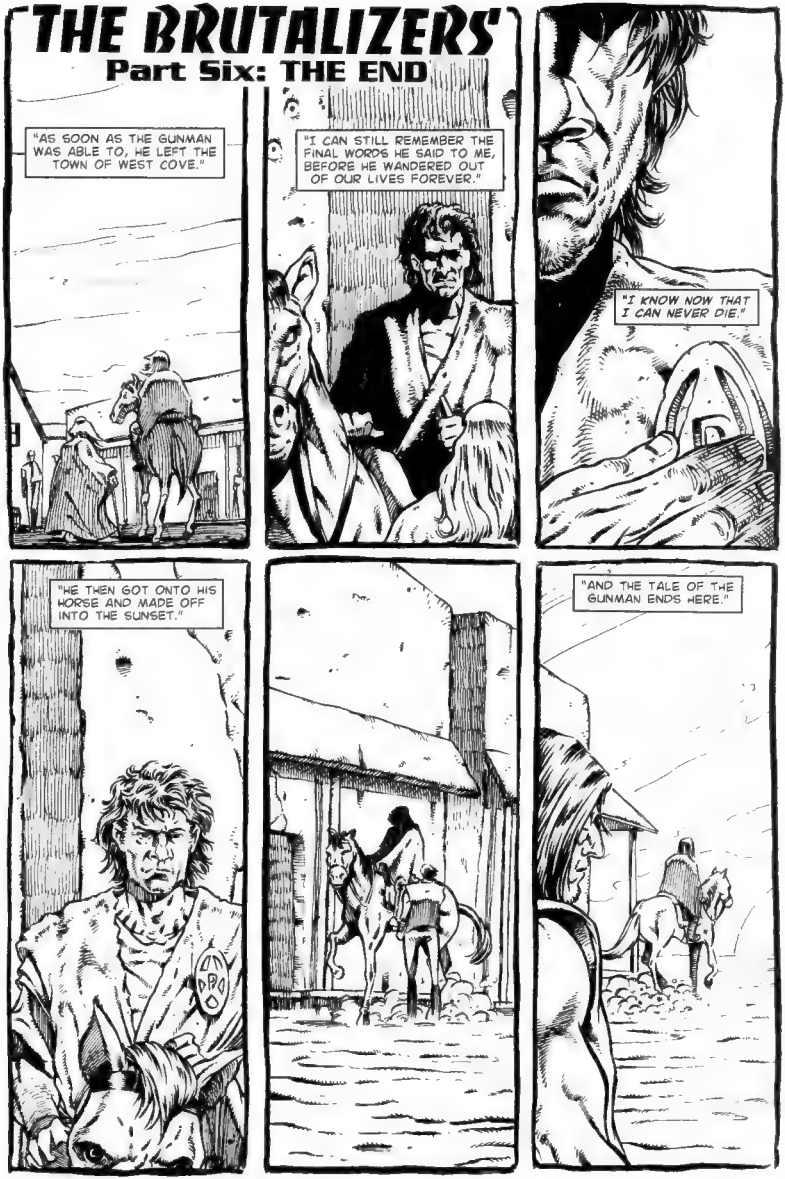
THE CHOKED CACKLE OF THE COURT JESTER WAS HOLLOW AND DRY. HIS QUIVERING GRIN, REVEALING UNITS OF IVORY TEETH, FORMED HIS ABRUPT JOLLY OUTBURST. THE SOUND OF THE FOOL'S MIRTH ECHOED AS IT FLOATED TO THE STONE FLOOR OF AN INFINITE HALL.

FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF HIS GUFFAW, SILENCE FLOODED THE CORRIDOR AS IF IT HAD SUDDENLY FILLED WITH WATER.

THE SILENCE, RINGING WITH A FORCE OF 50,000 SILVER BELLS, GREW AS DUST INCREASES OVER NEGLECTED FURNITURE; FOR HE LAUGHED ONLY ONCE . . .

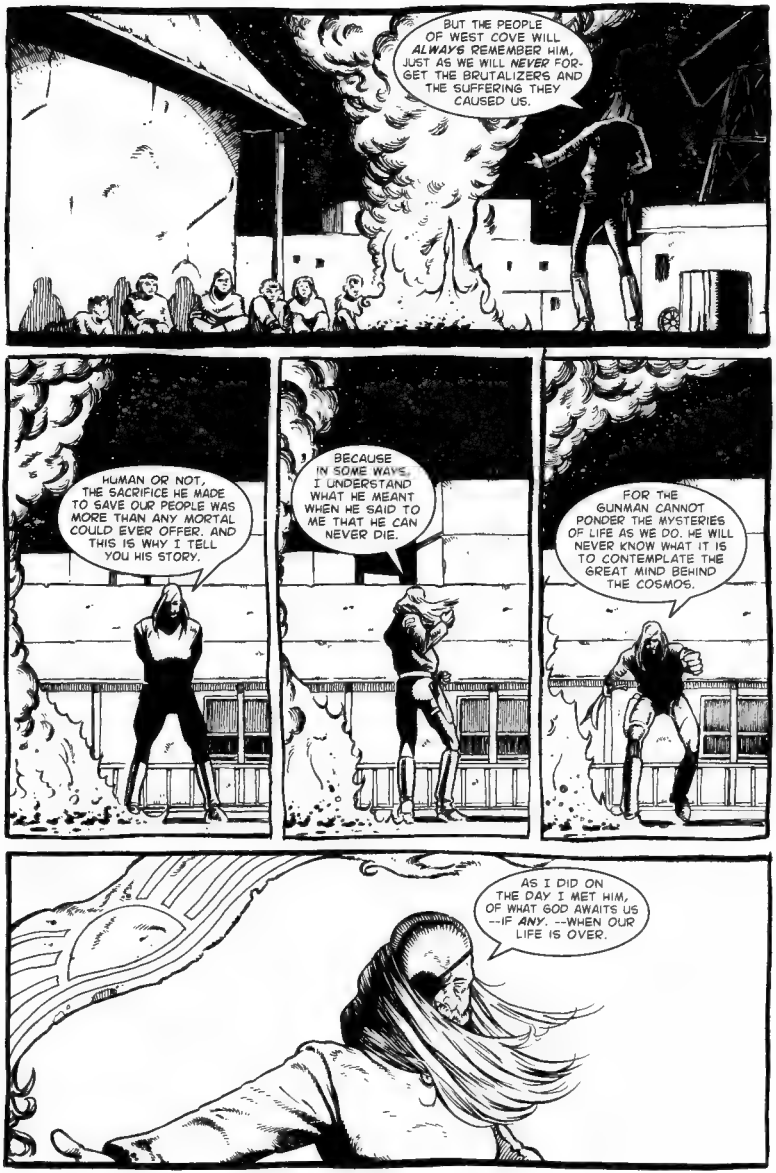
THE BRUTALIZERS

Part Six: THE END


"AS SOON AS THE GUNMAN WAS ABLE TO, HE LEFT THE TOWN OF WEST COVE."
"I CAN STILL REMEMBER THE FINAL WORDS HE SAID TO ME, BEFORE HE WANDERED OUT OF OUR LIVES FOREVER."
"I KNOW NOW THAT I CAN NEVER DIE."
"HE THEN GOT ONTO HIS HORSE AND MADE OFF INTO THE SUNSET."
"AND THE TALE OF THE GUNMAN ENDS HERE."

HOW I WISH I COULD INSPIRE YOU WITH AN ENDING TO HIS STORY WHICH WOULD PLACE HIM FIRMLY IN YOUR MEMORIES FOREVER--AS HE REMAINS IN MINE.
A TALE OF BRAVERY AND COURAGE, WHERE GOOD ALWAYS TRIUMPHS OVER EVIL.
BUT LIFE IS RARELY SO.

"THE TRUTH IS SIMPLIER--IF LESS EXCITING --THAT THE PEOPLE OF WEST COVE NEVER SAW, OR HEARD FROM THE GUNMAN AGAIN."
"ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN MANY NIGHTS SINCE HE LEFT US, WHEN I HAVE LAIN AWAKE, WONDERING WHERE HE MAY BE-- IF HE EVER FOUND THE BRUTALIZERS--"
"--INDEED, IF HE IS EVEN STILL ALIVE--PERHAPS ROAMING THE DESERT LIKE HE DID BEFORE,"
"AS A MAN."
BUT I REMIND MYSELF THAT HE IS *NOT* A MAN--- NOT ANYMORE.
HE IS SIMPLY A ***MACHINE,*** CARRYING OUT THE TASKS HE WAS PROGRAMMED FOR, BY A SCIENTIST LONG DEAD.


BUT THE PEOPLE OF WEST COVE WILL *ALWAYS* REMEMBER HIM, JUST AS WE WILL *NEVER* FORGET THE BRUTALIZERS AND THE SUFFERING THEY CAUSED US.
HUMAN OR NOT, THE SACRIFICE HE MADE TO SAVE OUR PEOPLE WAS MORE THAN ANY MORTAL COULD EVER OFFER. AND THIS IS WHY I TELL YOU HIS STORY.
BECAUSE IN SOME WAYS, I UNDERSTAND WHAT HE MEANT WHEN HE SAID TO ME THAT HE CAN NEVER DIE.
FOR THE GUNMAN CANNOT PONDER THE MYSTERIES OF LIFE AS WE DO. HE WILL NEVER KNOW WHAT IT IS TO CONTEMPLATE THE GREAT MIND BEHIND THE COSMOS.
AS I DID ON THE DAY I MET HIM, OF WHAT GOD AWAITS US --IF *ANY*. --WHEN OUR LIFE IS OVER.

"NO, THE GUNMAN WILL *ALWAYS* KNOW WHAT AWAITS HIM AT THE END OF HIS LIFE."
"NOTHING."
WHATEVER YOU'VE GOT-- WE'RE TAKING.
I THINK YOU'RE SITTING ON MY FAVORITE STOOL.

I SAID--
--I HEARD WHAT YOU SAID.
"BECAUSE TO HIM, GOD IS JUST A MAN."
THE END

LETTERS

Internet: 72164.1134@compuserve or calcomic@aol.com
225 N. Sheldon Rd., Plymouth, MI 48170

Marlan Harris
Burbank, CA
MAR93@aol.com

Dear Joe,

I just recently began reading NEGATIVE BURN. The variety and diversity in this comic is unmatched by anything else on the market, with the exception of DARK HORSE PRESENTS. Though for my money, NB has DHP beat, but this isn't a popularity contest. You're doing a great comic, one I now eagerly await month after month. Thank you for your time.

Thanks Marlan. It's nice to hear from a new reader of NB, especially since the thought in this marketplace is that a title with a long history like NB no longer picks up new readers. I guess there's something to longevity after all.

Edward Douglas
76453.7678@compuserve.com

Smart move opening up with the Macan/Biukovic story as it set a great mood for the rest of the issue. This was the sort of traditional science-fiction (ala ALIEN) that I usually enjoy even with a giant frog as the antagonist. Macan did a decent job making these characters interesting, and Edvin's artwork was looking particularly nice in this story; would you happen to know if he sells his pages and how I could get in touch with him? Anyway, it was pretty easy to see how their work in this story has developed to the point where it was at in the GRENDEL TALES arcs. This was a very cool opener, indeed.

The "Mr. Mamoulian" strip was particularly funny to me as I used to read the British music mags religiously, and I realize that all of these bands mentioned are *REAL*! Heck...I have records by more than half of them and the funny thing is that this is *exactly* what the club listings would have looked like back in those days (late 80's). I guess the concept of this strip was funnier than the actual punchline...but where was Mr. Mamoulian anyway? Still having those weird dreams?

I'm still enjoying "Iron Empires" and this installment had a lot more action than previous chapters, but also included some nice character interaction. I still don't like Moeller's line art as much as his painted work, but it works well for the action sequences. Actually, Moeller's layouts are absolutely fantastic in the fight sequence; I don't remember seeing this sort of choreographed fighting in SHADOW EMPIRES. Nice stuff. (Not bad so far...three stories in and you're three for three!)

And then we get to the second chapter of "The Brutalizers"... While I like the art, there really isn't much of a story to this and it moves too slow for my tastes. It seems like nothing really important or interesting has happened in the first two chapters, and I'm not sure there is really enough of a premise to make this stand out from similar stories. Well, hopefully this won't last for too many issues...

Next up is another Greg DiGenti strip, and you probably already know how much I like his work. I'll keep my gushing to a minimum. Anyway, everyone has experienced this sort of thing... waiting for someone to show up at a meeting at a bar...and in this case, the punchline was pretty funny. I love this sort of "real-life" humor that Greg does so well. Can't wait for that one-shot next year. I can guarantee that it'll get a place in my monthly Picks.

The first thing that jumps out at me in "Shadow City" is the starkly vivid artwork that looks a bit like the work of Frank Stack. I liked the premise of having a woman police officer as the central character, and I was a bit worried when this story started out with a lot of "genre traps" but as it went on, I began to enjoy this police tale. I enjoyed Nick Wyche's writing quite a bit, as he definitely gives this story a uniquely distinctive

voice. The ending was a bit cryptic, but all in all, this was well done, and I'd like to see more of Lt. Berg and the rest of the characters.

"I Was a Scapegoat for Love" seems to have been influenced by Steve Darnall's "Empty Love Stories" , but this was just plain weird (while also reminding me of a particularly strange relationship I was once involved in...hmm...). The art looked like how I would imagine Jack Kirby's romance comics must have looked like. A fun story, though.

"Carla Allison" seems like such a departure compared to some of John McCrea's other work (granted, I'm not very familiar with his work besides the stuff he's done with Garth Ennis) and the art didn't really give the reader a very good impression if this was straight humor, introspection or what. I didn't think much of the "punchline" of the story either.

Nice to see Phil Hester back in the pages of NEGATIVE BURN with a tie-in to ACTION PLANET COMICS work (another cool anthology series). This seemed like the middle of a longer story, and I didn't think of it much on second reading. From this story, it's clear that Nails is no Wretch...that's for sure... but he's a fun character nonetheless. (I've enjoyed his appearance in ACTION PLANET more than this story, which is little more than an 'in-joke') I'm looking forward to Phil's other ventures, particularly SHOCKTRAUMA COMICS.

Next up is the second chapter of "The Ignorant Layman" and I can only help it's better than the first. While I usually like this sort of quirkiness, there also seems to be a bit of a smarminess to the dialogue that I don't like. Still, I think this is beginning to grow on me, as it seems to be a cross between STRANGEHAVEN and—of all things—FLAMING CARROT! I like the art more than I do the writing, but I'll probably enjoy this more as it goes on.

Just as I was about to write off this issue, we have another "Mr. Murray" strip and another "Rob Haines" story to save the day! And Carney and Taylor are 3 for 3 with "Shopping Inferno". This is hilarious stuff... which oddly, *also* reminds me of FLAMING CARROT! Do I get the feeling that Bob Burden might be making another NEGATIVE BURN appearance soon? (It's been awhile...)

Is "Pact with the Devil" a continuation of a previous Rob Hanes story, as I'm sure I don't remember it? While it seemed like we came in mid-storyline, I can't emphasize enough how much I enjoy Randy Reynaldo's Rob Hanes stories, which doesn't give me much of an excuse for not having picked up any issues of ADVENTURE STRIP DIGEST yet, I guess. This was another terrific story!

There's not really much to say about "Earthbound".

Highlight of this issue for me were "Linea", "Shadow City", and of course, the Rob Hanes story. In general, this issue was a bit more consistent than the last.

I don't know if Edvin sells his original artwork, but I'll try to remember to ask him for you. Remind me next time you see me (or the next time you write). I'm a big fine of the Macan/Biukovic team myself, so expect to see them frequently in these pages.

Really glad you enjoy Randy Reynaldo's Rob Haines stories so much, Edward, especially considering he'll be bringing his self-published series over to Caliber. Look for ROB HAINES: JUSTICE INTERNATIONAL later this summer.

Olav Beemer
Zeist, The Netherlands

Dear Joe,

NEGATIVE BURN #39 surely offered a very intriguing cover. Edvin Biukovic's artwork has been able to thrill me ever since I first saw his work more than a year or so ago and it's good to see such a talented man's work appear in the pages of NEGATIVE BURN. But there was more to contend with than just the cover. After all, inside this very issue, thirteen new features awaited me and since I have quite a lot to say about them, let's move onward.

For starters, it was good to see Darko Macan and Edvin Biukovic in these pages again. Their "Linea" was a very entertaining piece of work, complete with some enjoyable references to the ALIEN movies, as well as being something of a parody on that type of science fiction movies. I mean, a frog as the terrifying alien? That really was a good one. Otherwise, this was a clever tale with good dialogue and stunning artwork. Ask these gentlemen back, even if it's

only slightly possible.

"Mr. Mamoulian" turned out to be another fun installment of this continuing one-page gem. Whereas in the early days of this book, I at times didn't like Brian Bolland's work, I find myself enjoying these short studies in absurdity more and more. This time around, it obviously was no different than the past several months. All those horrible band names-- just goes to show that some musicians either have no taste or are just plain weird! <G>

The latest installment of "Iron Empires" wasn't really my cup of tea. While I liked most of the recent chapters in this story, somehow the pacing seemed a bit off just now. I don't know why, but hopefully, upcoming chapters will intrigue me again.

"The Brutalizers" offered another chapter with little substance, I'm afraid. Just like last time around, there is that definite moody atmosphere which indeed gives the story an intriguing feel, but thus far, I've simply been unable to really get into the tale itself. Perhaps upcoming chapters will change that.

Greg DiGenti's "I'll Meet You There" was hilarious, plain and simple.

"Shadow City," on the other hand, had me puzzled at first, because after having finished the installment, I kind of missed the point. But the dialogue and storytelling are exactly what I really enjoy these days, so I'm looking forward for more of Nick Wyche and John Holmes.

"I Was A Scapegoat For Love" reminded me of some really old comics, and quite honestly, this type of old-fashioned storytelling doesn't do anything for me.

The short "Carla Allison" feature did, though. I've recently met John McCrea and his being such a nice British fella and all only makes me appreciate his craftsmanship more. This short tale was extremely funny, so my thumbs up to John and Si. Are there any more McCrea features coming our way soon?

"Nails" by Phil Hester and Ande Parks was a good ironic tale, which at the same time proved to be some fine reading as well as a something that made a very good point about the way some heroines dress these days. High heels and the g-string as a costume indeed make little sense, but they pop up all over the place anyway.

The second chapter of "The Ignorant Layman" suffered from the same problems as the first chapter did, namely patchy storytelling. The artwork, though, looks appealing and shows a lot of promise. It nevertheless will be interesting to see how this particular story-line will develop in future chapters.

"Mr. Murray" was funny as always. A good point and lovely storytelling by Dave Taylor and Ian Carney. They are on their way to becoming NEGATIVE BURN regulars and that's just the way I like it. Speaking of the way I like it, Randy Reynaldo's "Rob Hanes" fits that bill too. I'm looking forward to seeing more from Randy here at Caliber somewhere next year— this guy deserves wider recognition!

Finally, "Earthbound" failed to interest me. I can't say much else about it. But about NEGATIVE BURN #39 I can say that I've been thoroughly enjoying it from cover to cover. Save the two tales which were second chapters in a multi-part tale, I have enjoyed almost all installments a whole lot. And hey, with that aforementioned powerful cover, this issue was a can't-miss from the start already!

You can bet you'll see more of the Macan-Biukovic team in these pages as they've given me plenty of material to choose from. You'll also see more from John McCrea in the near future as well. I happen to like all these gentlemen quite a bit so I'll publish everything I can from them. Keep your eyes peeled to these pages for more.

I'd also like to point out that I've officially taken a staff job at the Caliber offices in Michigan (I'm the "Creative Director", as the inside front cover now states), so any letters, back issue orders or subscriptions should now be addressed to me at the Caliber office address (found on the inside front cover and the top of the letters page). I'm excited about the new position and also the opportunity to beat up on my brother, James, who occupies the office next to mine. I figure this will probably happen on a daily basis.

See ya next month.

Joe Pruett

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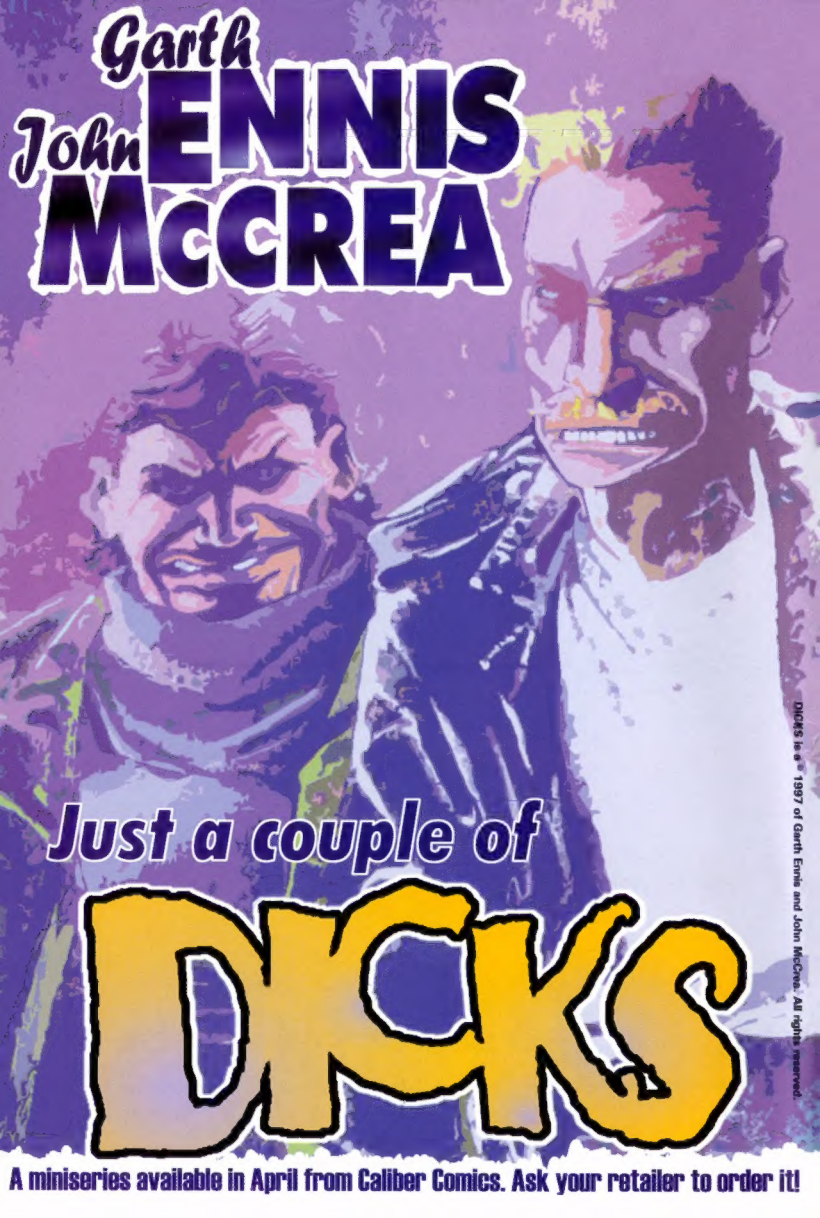
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